
Producing an Antisemitic Consensus within the Framework of the *Judenjagd*

The Role of Poles in the Holocaust Based on the Murder of Nachman Blumental's Family in Wielopole Skrzyńskie during the German Occupation

Katrin Stoll

Abstract: This article – which is based on the records of Nachman Blumental that I discovered as part of my work on his archive material and that I brought to light, as well as on the documentation of two official investigations – deals with the complicity of Poles – uniformed (the *police granatowa*, or Blue Police) and civilians – in the Nazi project to kill every Jew without exception in Dębica County during the German occupation. I analyze the mechanism that set in motion antisemitic violence within the framework of the *Judenjagd*, i.e. the Jew hunt. I argue that it was attitudes and behaviors in the environment that determined the effectiveness of the German Nazi project to persecute and murder all Jews without exception. The majority group plays the role of “second instance” (Elżbieta Janicka). By reconstructing the crime against Ariel Blumental and Maria Blumental in June 1943 in Brzeziny, Mała and Wielopole Skrzyńskie, and by deconstructing the mystification of the crime by the inhabitants, I uncover the foundations of this process and show how the mechanism of self-representation as non-involved functions. “Participating observers” (Elżbieta Janicka) mask their own participation in the murder of Nachman Blumental's family. The task, then, is to interpret both what is said and what is not said. The crime discussed in the article is emblematic in that it sheds light on the socio-cultural framework of the Holocaust and its landscape. It shows the loneliness of those who were hiding, handed over and sentenced to death by their neighbors.

Keywords: antisemitism; Shoah; *Judenjagd*; Blue Police; Dębica County; participating observers; antisemitic consensus; landscape; Jewish cemetery

I. A Trip through Dębica and its Surroundings

It's a strange thing, while we Jews did not even dream that the murder order concerned all Jews, the Poles immediately realized that no Jew would survive the war.

(Perechodnik, 2018, p. 245)

Dębica

In the summer of 1948, Nachman Blumental (1902–1983),¹ director of the Jewish Historical Institute, went to Dębica, Wielopole Skrzyńskie and the surrounding area in

1 Nachman Blumental was born on May 12, 1902 in Borszczów. His mother, Basia, came from a family of famous rabbis, the Meisels. He studied philosophy (including under professors Jan Łukasiewicz, Tadeusz Kotarbiński and Władysław Witwicki), Polish philology (including under professors Ujejski, Kridel, Szober, and Kryński), history (including under professors Kochanowski and Smoleński) and pedagogy (including under professors Baley and Nowaczyński) at the University of Warsaw. He graduated with a degree in Polish philology. His master's thesis was entitled “O przenośni” (On Metaphor). As of 1928, he worked as a teacher, first in Lublin, then in Łódź. During this time, he published several works on Jewish literature, Polish and Jewish folklore, literary theory and metaphorology, in the *Literary Bleter*, among others. When the war broke out, he fled

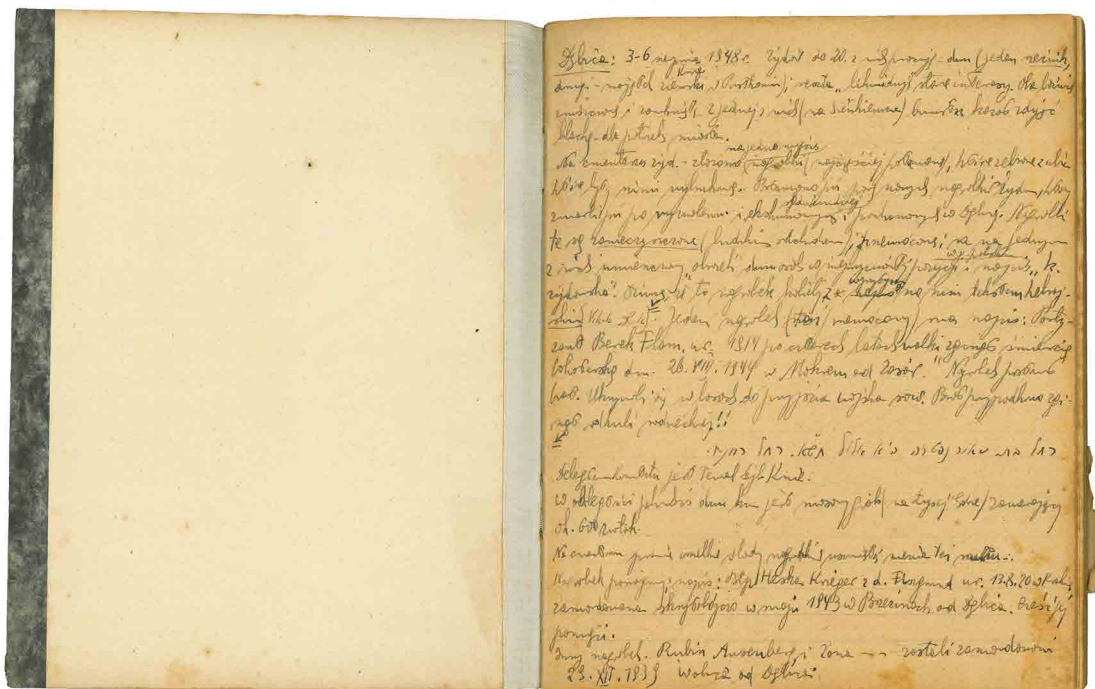


Nachman Blumental, 1947
(courtesy of Miron Blumental. © Miron Blumental)

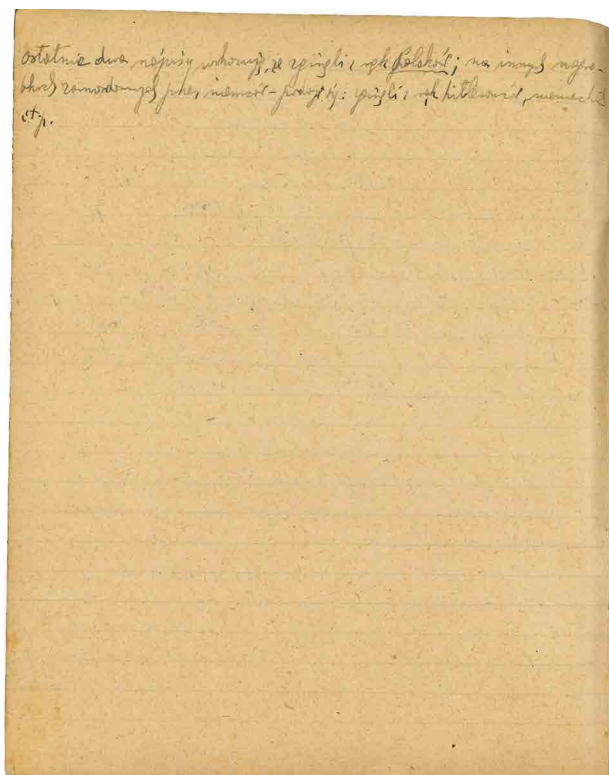
order to trace the fate of his wife, Maria Blumental (née Tewel) and their son Ariel during the German occupation.

Maria Blumental was born in Dębica. From August 3–6, 1948, Nachman Blumental was in Dębica. He saw the scale of the destruction of Jewish life. It was an imperative, and a gesture of remembrance for the murdered, that traces of the Holocaust be preserved. Blumental noted:

from Łódź to Borszczów to escape from the Germans. He stayed first in Ukraine, where he worked as a teacher, then in Bashkiria. (This information comes from the curriculum vitae "Mein Lebenslauf" written by Nachman Blumental, probably at the end of the 1960s as part of a DAAD scholarship application to the Federal Republic of Germany. See Nachman Blumental Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research). Blumental lost contact with his family – his son Ariel and wife Maria – in early July 1941, right after the Third Reich invaded the Soviet Union. Immediately after liberation from German occupation, he became involved in documenting the Holocaust, from 1944 to 1946, as part of the Central Jewish Historical Commission, then from 1947 to 1950 as director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. After emigrating to Israel, Blumental worked for Beit Lohamei Ha-Geta'ot, publishing *Dapim*, the first journal on the Holocaust in Israel. From 1954 on, he worked for Yad Vashem.



Nachman Blumental's records, the first page of the record entitled "Dębica" (Nachman Blumental Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, courtesy of Miron Blumental and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. © Miron Blumental)



Nachman Blumental's records, fragment of the second page of the record entitled "Dębica" (Nachman Blumental Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, courtesy of Miron Blumental and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. © Miron Blumental)



Maria and Ariel Blumental (Nachman Blumental Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, courtesy of Miron Blumental and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. © Miron Blumental)

Dębica: August 3–6, 1948, up to 20 Jews [author's note: i.e. 20 survivors in total], two are working (one – a butcher, and the other – a landed estate [author's note: the word Knie is placed by Blumental above estate] in Pustków); the others are “liquidating” old interests. Both synagogues² destroyed and closed. The mayor ordered the plate removed from one of them (on Sienkiewiczza Street) [author's note: today Wielopolska] – for the needs of the city. At the Jewish cemetery tombstones (most often broken) were piled in one place, collected from the streets that had been paved with them. Several new tombstones of Jews who died after the liberation, exhumed elsewhere and buried in Dębica, have already been broken. These tombstones are contaminated (with human faeces); overturned; on one of them there is a “picture” of two people in an indecent position [author's note: the words “in Polish” are

- 2 The synagogues in Dębica were destroyed for the first time in the eighteenth century. In 1712, the Catholic bishop Kazimierz Łubieński issued a decree for the destruction of both synagogues and the prohibition of their reconstruction. “The New Town Synagogue in Dębica was built during the second wave of Jewish settlement in the town, when – as a result of the town's destruction by the Swedes and a fire in 1660 – the town owners decided to create a New Town in Dębica. We do not know the exact date, but we can determine the construction of the building to have been in the 1680s / 1690s. As a result of Bishop Kazimierz Łubieński's 1712 decree, this synagogue (like the Old Town synagogue) was partially destroyed and closed. Based on an expert technical opinion of the building and a study of historical sources, we can assume that the building was renovated and put back into use at the beginning of Austro-Hungarian rule – that is after 1772”. Ireneusz Socha's email to Katrin Stoll on May 4, 2021. Information provided in the Virtual Shtetl that the New Town Synagogue was built after 1750 is false: <https://sztetl.org.pl/pl/miejscowosci/d/202-debica/112-synagogi-domy-modlitwy-i-inne/83992-synagoga-nowomiejska-w-debicy-ul-krakowska-3>.

placed by Blumental above “position”] and the inscription “Jewish k.”³ It is strange that this is a woman’s tombstone with Hebrew text engraved on it [השא ו.א.א].⁴ One tombstone (also destroyed) has the inscription: “Partisan Berek Flam, born 1914, after four years of battle died a hero’s death on 26 VIII 1944 in Mokre near Zasów”. The tombstone was covered in faeces. They had hidden in the woods until the Soviet army arrived. Berek died by accident from a Soviet bullet!!

אנוור לחר. אי”שת לולא א”ה הרטפנ. ריאמ תב לחר

The delegate to the Committee is Tewel Lejb Knie.

About two kilometers away, in (Łysa Góra), there is a mass grave with about 600 bodies.

Almost all traces of tombstones in the cemetery have been removed; there is also no wall.

Postwar tombstone; inscription: Blessed Heśka Krieger née Fiszgrund born 13.8.20 in Kraków murdered in May 1943 in Brzeziny near Dębica. Rest in Peace.

Another tombstone. Rubin Aussenberg and Wife – – – were murdered on 29. XII. 1939 Wolica near Dębica.

The last two inscriptions indicate that they died at the hands of Poles. On other tombstones, murdered by Germans – it says: they died at the hands of German Hitlerites, etc.

Nachman Blumental’s record from August 1948 is testimony to Polish antisemitism and the German policy of murdering all Jews without exception. The shooting of Jews from the Dębica ghetto, mostly elderly people, women and children,⁶ in the Wolicki woods on the so-called Łysa Góra, took place in July 1942, probably during the first so-called liquidation action in the Dębica ghetto (July 21–25, 1942). As Tomasz Frydel, a scholar of the Holocaust in Dębica County, writes, the bodies were “buried in the woods near Wolica” (Frydel, 2018, p. 411).

Historians have not been able to determine the exact number of Jews shot by the Germans, though “according to some calculations, 180–600⁷ people were shot there. It is also known that there were two transports to the death camp in Bełżec. After the end of the main phase of the deportation, 1,700 Jews remained in the Dębica ghetto” (Frydel, 2018, p. 414). During the second so-called liquidation action, on December 15–16, 1942, the Germans deported 600–1000 Jews from Dębica to the death camp in Bełżec (see Frydel, 2018, p. 414). I will discuss Nachman Blumental’s notes on Bełżec below.

3 The original Polish here is “k. żydowska” with “k.” no doubt being an abbreviation for “kurwa”, the Polish word for “whore”.

4 From the Hebrew: “woman, etc.” Special thanks to Yechiel Weizman and Ireneusz Socha.

5 From the Hebrew: “Rachela, daughter of Meir, died 5 Elul 5701 [August 12, 1941]. Rachela Równa”. Special thanks to Yechiel Weizman.

6 Frydel writes that “Jews deemed ‘useless’ were shot” (Frydel, 2018, p. 411). This concerned people selected by the Germans as “unfit for work” and “unfit for resettlement”.

7 According to the findings of the journalist and regionalist Władysław Bartosz, 574 Jews were murdered. Bartosz gives July 10, 1942 as the date of the execution. This date also appears on the commemorative plaque funded by Jehuda Barnatan in 1949. Władysław Bartosz’s study was published in three parts in the *Echo Żołęgi* newspaper printed by the Dębickie Zakłady Opon Samochodowych (Dębica Car Tire Company) “Stomil”: *Echo Żołęgi*, no. 1 (422), Dębica, January 14–27, 1986; *Echo Żołęgi*, no. 2 (423), Dębica, January 28 – February 11, 1986; *Echo Żołęgi*, no. 3 (424), Dębica, February 12–24, 1986. Special thanks to Ireneusz Socha.



The plot where the Old Town Synagogue stood in Dębica (photo by Jos Stübner, June 30, 2020, courtesy of the same. © Jos Stübner)



The New Town Synagogue in Dębica in 2020 (photo by Ireneusz Socha, courtesy of the same. © Ireneusz Socha)



The interior of the New Town Synagogue in Dębica (photo by Katrin Stoll, July 1, 2020)



Monument in the Wolicki woods on the so-called Łysa Góra at the site of the mass execution of Jews from the Dębica ghetto (photo by Ireneusz Socha, December 2020, courtesy of the same. © Ireneusz Socha)



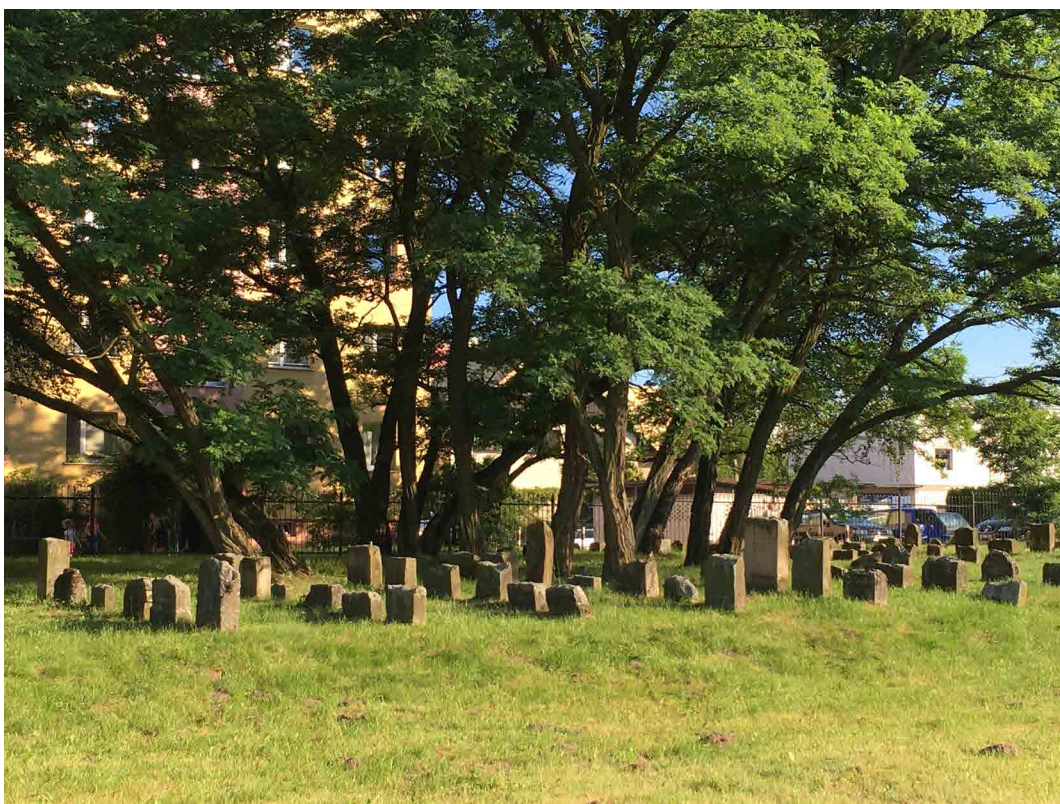
Jewish cemetery in Dębica (Yad Vashem Archives, signature 37036, photo by Adam Bujak 1963.
© Yad Vashem, Photo Archive, Jerusalem)



Jewish cemetery in Dębica (Yad Vashem Archives, signature 37036, photo by Adam Bujak 1963.
© Yad Vashem, Photo Archive, Jerusalem)



Jewish cemetery in Dębica in 2020 (photo by Ireneusz Socha, courtesy of the same. © Ireneusz Socha)



Jewish cemetery in Dębica in 2020 (photo by Ireneusz Socha, courtesy of the same. © Ireneusz Socha)



Jewish cemetery in Dębica in 2020 (photo by Ireneusz Socha, courtesy of the same. © Ireneusz Socha)

The postwar desecration of the Jewish cemetery in Dębica, documented by Blumental, proves that, according to the will of the majority, no Jewish trace was to remain there. The pornographic image he saw on one tombstone indicates that the woman in question had been raped.

After being liberated from German occupation, Holocaust survivors continued to experience deadly antisemitic violence. In the years 1944–1947, over a thousand Jews⁸ were murdered in Poland (Cała & Datner, 1997, p. 15). Antisemitic violence also continued in Dębica, where Blumental saw the tombstones of those murdered after 1944.

Unlike Dębica, where Blumental had contact with a few Holocaust survivors, he met no survivors in Wielopole, 26.5 km north of Dębica.

8 According to Alina Cała's estimates, over 800 Jewish women, men and children were murdered in the years 1944–1946 (Cała, 2012, p. 455). "At the same time, about 150,000 of those who had survived on Polish territory (about 50,000) or returned from the USSR (about 200,000) left Poland" (Datner & Pieńkowska, 2017, p. 88).

The Event in Wielopole Skrzyńskie

We read about Wielopole in Blumental's records from 1948: "Wielopole (a dead town; Jewish houses almost all destroyed; not a single Jew. Before the war up to 2,000 souls in total. There was a miracle worker rabbi – Pemper)".⁹ He talked with non-Jewish residents who were there in June 1943. He noted their stories about what they had seen and what they knew. According to Nachman Blumental's findings, Maria and Ariel Blumental were arrested in June 1943 by two Blue Policemen in the village of Mała, taken to the police station in Wielopole Skrzyńskie, placed under arrest, and were shot the next day – June 7, 1943 – by a certain German at the Jewish cemetery in Wielopole Skrzyńskie.¹⁰ On August 9, 1948, Blumental wrote the following letter to the prosecutor's office at the District Court in Tarnów, in which he revealed the murder:

Being recently in the vicinity of Dębica-Wielopole, I learned from peasants in the area that there was a former "Blue" Policeman Kapeluch in the prison in Tarnów. So I am in a hurry to report that this policeman – as I was informed [author's note: handwritten note inserted] – together with his companion Jakij, arrested my wife, Dr. Maria Blumental, née Tewel, and her three-year-old son in the location of Mała in June 1943, and then transported them to Wielopole, where they were shot the next day.

At the same time, I am asking the Prosecutor to inform the defendant if he could give the exact date on which it happened. If the Prosecutor considered it admissible for me to meet the accused personally, I would be ready to appear in Tarnów at a time specified by the Prosecutor.¹¹

The arrest of Maria Blumental and Ariel Blumental by the policemen took place after they were denounced by residents of Wielopole Skrzyńskie, neighboring Brzeziny or neighboring Mała. Before being shot, Maria Blumental was held for an entire night in a jail cell.

9 I quote from Elżbieta Janicka's transcription. The document is part of the Nachman Blumental archive, which was maintained by his son Miron Blumental. For many years these documents were located at his home in Vancouver, Canada. As a member of the PREMEC (PREMIers ÉCrits de la Shoah) research team led by Dr. Aurélia Kalisky (Zentrum für Literaturforschung, Berlin) and professor Judith Lyon-Caen (EHESS, Paris), I went to Vancouver twice in 2018 to retrieve and review the Nachman Blumental archive and prepare the transfer of materials to the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York. In Vancouver, I was helped by Professor Richard Menkis, Michèle Smolkin, Professor Sima Godfrey and Anna Switzer. In the summer of 2018 – thanks to Professor Sima Godfrey – I worked in an office at the Peter Wall Institute. In November and December 2018, Professor Richard Menkis provided me with an office at the UBC History Department. In November 2018, I came across Blumental's records from 1948. I wish to thank Elżbieta Janicka for deciphering the partially damaged manuscript and for the first transcription from December 2018. I also wish to thank Anna Switzer for her cooperation on the Polish-to-English translation while working on the archival material at UBC. The original document has been in the Nachman Blumental Collection at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research since February 2020, along with other materials that were stored in 32 Bankers Boxes.

10 On August 9, 1948, Nachman Blumental wrote to the prosecutor at the District Court in Tarnów. See Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (IPN), Rz 358/111, Żydowski Instytut Historyczny przy C.K. Żydów w Polsce, Warszawa, dn. 9 sierpnia 1948 r., Blumental Nachman, do Pana Prokuratora Sądu Okręgowego w Tarnowie [Jewish Historical Institute at the Central Committee of Polish Jews in Poland, Warsaw, on August 9, 1948, Blumental Nachman, to the District Court Prosecutor in Tarnów], p. 0004.

11 Ibid. I found a copy of Blumental's letter – without the letterhead of the Jewish Historical Institute – in his archives. The original is part of the criminal case file against Kapelusz. The Prosecutor's Office at the District Court in Tarnów received Blumental's letter on August 12, 1948.

9 sierpnia 1948

Do
Pana Prokuratora Sądu Okręgowego
w T a r n o w i e

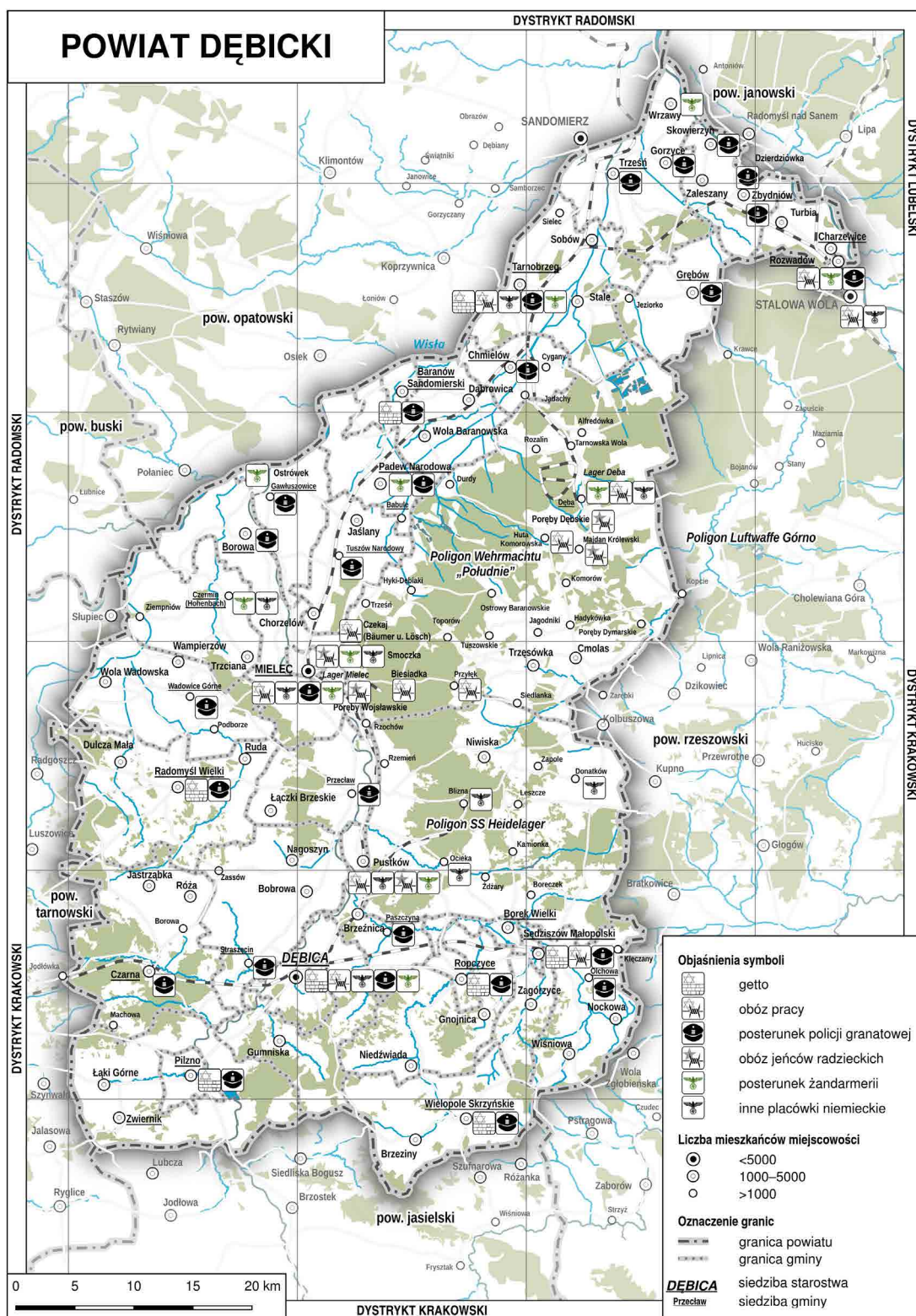
Będąc ostatnio w okolicach Dąbicy - Wielopola dowiedziałem się od okolicznych chłopów o tym, że w więzieniu w Tarnowie znajduje się b. policjant "granatowy" Kapeluch. Spieszę więc donieść, że policjant ten wspólnie ze swoim towarzyszem Jakiejem zatrzymali żonę moją dr. Marię z Tewlów Blumentalową wraz z Jej synkiem trzyletnim we wsi Małej w czerwcu 1943 r. i następnie odstawili ich do Wielopola, gdzie nazajutrz zostali rozstrzelani.

Równocześnie proszę Pana Prokuratora o poinformowanie się u oskarżonego, czy nie mógłby on podać dokładnie dnia w którym to się stało. Gdyby Pan Prokurator uważał za dopuszczalne bym się osobiście mógł zetknąć z oskarżonym, to gotówem stawić się w Tarnowie w oznaczonym przez Pana Prokuratora czasie.

Z wysokim poważaniem

Blumental Nachman

Letter from Nachman Blumental to the Prosecutor of the District Court in Tarnów, August 1948 (Nachman Blumental Collection, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, courtesy of Miron Blumental and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. © Miron Blumental)



The map in the cartographic study by Zbigniew Gałęza is taken from the chapter entitled “Powiat Dębica” by Tomasz Frydel, vol. II of the collective work *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, edited by Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski (Engelking & Grabowski, 2018). Special thanks to Jakub Petelewicz

On the basis of Nachman Blumental's handwritten notes in Polish, which I discovered in his archive, and the documentation of the investigation against Blue Policemen in Wielopole Skrzyńskie, it is possible to analyze the attitudes to the crimes by those whom Elżbieta Janicka terms "participating observers" (Janicka, 2008, 2018b, 2018c). The research question is: How was the murder of Blumental's family possible?

RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA
Województwo *Poznań*
Powiat *Deblica*
URZĄD STANU CYWILNEGO
Wielopole Skrzyńskie

Nr *29 / 50*

ODPIS SKRÓCONY AKTU ZEJŚCIA

L.I. zg. 1745/49 Zaświadczam, że *Maria Blumental* s.d. *Fewel*
imię i nazwisko zawód

zamieszkała w *Warszawie* urodzona dnia *1 sierpnia*
tysiąc dziewięćset czterech 1904 roku w *Deblicy*
zmarła dnia *7 czerwca* tysiąc *dziewięćset*
czterdzieści trzy 1943 roku w *Wielopolu Skrzyńskim*
o godz. _____ minut _____ w _____

Ojciec: *Judea Fewel* zam. w _____
Matka: *Paulina s.d. Sutrin* zam. w _____

Zmarła była żoną zameżna z *Nachmanem Blumental*
Wielopole Skrzyńskie dnia *26 lipca* 1950 r.

Urzędnik Stanu Cywilnego:
Chmura Stanisław

Wzór Nr M. 15. Gospod. Zrzeszenie Sam. Teryt. Warszawa, Dobra 10.
Druk. FWZG Warszawa, Tamka 3. 720.000. Zam. 3985/3093/CD/II.40.

B-49727

Abbreviated copy of death certificate, Registry Office in Wielopole Skrzyńskie, July 26, 1950 (Nachman Blumental Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, courtesy of Miron Blumental and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. © Miron Blumental)

Maria Blumental did not “die”, as the Registry Office in Wielopole Skrzyńskie put it. She was murdered. Along with her child.

Retrospection

The case of Nachman Blumental and his family is worth following because their history during the Second World War is emblematic – both of the Jewish experience on the so-called “Aryan” side during the Holocaust, and of the Jewish experience in the Soviet Union. It highlights the endeavors of survivor¹² scholars right after the Holo-

12 For more on the genealogy of the term “Holocaust survivor”, see Bothe & Nesselrodt, 2016. Regarding the term “survivor”, see the definition of “Shoah survivor” provided by Yad Vashem: <https://www.yadvashem.org/archive/hall-of-names/database/faq.html>.

caust. As for the latter two subjects, the framework of this article allows me only to mention them here without going into greater detail.

In his wartime diary, Nachman Blumental writes about hunger, loneliness and a longing for his wife and son.¹³ At the beginning of July 1941, just after the Third Reich invaded the Soviet Union, Blumental lost contact with his son Ariel and his wife Maria. On July 31, 1941, Blumental noted:

It's my wife's birthday tomorrow. On the 5th [author's note: of August], 11th wedding anniversary, on the 16th, my son's year-and-a-half birthday. – The most painful thing for me is that my Son is growing and being raised, and I cannot witness it. It is good fortune to be able to watch a child develop at this age. Time passes – and I don't see his gradual development. It is irretrievable. My son is growing and I cannot influence any of it, cannot help him in anything, defend him from anything. Just when he needs my care the most, I am sitting here 2–3,000 km away from Him, with no contact with His surroundings. I don't know anything about Him. I can't write to Him. Later, when I arrive (when will it be?), He will view me as a stranger. What pain it causes a Father! And I will no longer be able to guide our relations, to fix them. Children drift away from their parents over time. I left all the trouble to my wife. Is she coping?! After all, I have decided to fight against them [author's note: illegible word] for me, and what about them? Whose side are they on? Do they have anything to eat? Do they have any money for living? I took my wife's last penny!

And the rain is still pouring – it is pouring, they are saying horrible things about my wife; severe frosts, blizzards. How will she survive with nothing? Today I do not go out at all, because my shoes are leaking, and there is nothing to burn here. In any case, there is a roof over my head and a cold room. I am now in a better mood than before. I am only afraid of colds, diseases (bad toilets ...), but somehow I will survive it all. And they?

I can't imagine taking Ariel in my arms, stroking his head. That it is real, how his smooth skin would feel to the touch. It's hard to say what I mean. I have two photos of Him, but they give me no idea of Him at all. Every day I look at these photos, one of them has him and my wife, and I enter the date. (Nachman Blumental's wartime diary, Nachman Blumental Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research)

The next day, he wrote, among other entries:

The only thing I do here – I read a little, a little from a book about raising children and I think about Ariel all the time. I'm learning to raise him.

Isn't this tragicomic! When I was with him, I did not do that, Now distant from him, cut off – I see mistakes in his upbringing that I would like to fix, I would devote every minute of my life to Him – I am so cut off from the world that I do not even know what is happening in it. Even if it were possible to go home, I wouldn't know it.

Ariel, Ariel, Today my wife's birthday.

Ariel, my dear!

As I said goodbye to my wife, I understood how much I mean to her. She never said words to me like the ones she said then. – But you don't need to mope around! I keep reading about raising children of a similar age. (Nachman Blumental's wartime diary, Nachman Blumental Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research)

13 The diary is part of the archive of Nachman Blumental. See the Nachman Blumental Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

nie widać. - Jedyną ciotkę, którą - ciekawie trochę, chociaż o mychomani dzieci i po
 cety, co mi się o Ariel. Uczę się po mychomani - cy to mi się trapiło. Słysz
 2. Minę tego, co woliłem, ten wolałem, od niego, odcieży - wtedy było, w jej
 woin, które chcieliśmy nieprawić, podzielić, ale wtedy, niestety, - jest
 tak, odcieży od dziecka, i nawet nie wiem, co się na nim dzieje. Jeżeli nawet
 czasem widać, że to jest, nie było o tym, nie było.
 Ariel, Ariel, ten mój syn.
 Ariel, wchodź!
 Przyjrzę się, i znowu przehoruję, że, ile się nie wiem, nigdy mi nie
 nie nie przehoruję, jak wtedy. - Ale nie było, nie było, ciekawie, ciekawie
 mychomani dzieci w jesiennym niebie! -

An excerpt from Nachman Blumental's diary, entry dated August 1, 1941 (Nachman Blumental Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, courtesy of Miron Blumental and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. © Miron Blumental)


Two years later, on August 5, 1943, Blumental wrote: "The thirteenth anniversary of my wedding. – And I live here in Bashkiria". On February 15, 1944, Nachman Blumental records in his diary: "15 // [author's note: February] Tuesday. [...] Tomorrow is my Son's birthday. I've been thinking about Him all day. [...] I am thinking of leaving here". "Here" is probably Bashkiria, where he was working as a teacher at the time. On February 16, 1944, we read:

[...] I am thinking about Ariel. – Today is his birthday. I saw Him from 16/II/40 – 1/VII 1941 – 1 year 4 months – 13 days. I haven't seen Him from July 1, 41 – February 16, 1944 – 3 years, 7 months, 16 days. Almost twice as much. The most interesting period of his life has been irretrievably lost for me.

The entry dated May 12, 1944 reads:

Today is my birthday. 42 years! Really [?]. – I counted. Today my son is 4 years 2 months 24 days old. I saw Him 1 year 4 months 14 days. I haven't seen him for 3 years 8 months 12 days. – No news from home. I have already given up hope that I will receive [?] [author's note: some kind of] letter. [...] But despite everything, I believe they are alive [?], that I will come to them in Bor.

As he wrote the above quoted notes in his diary in May 1944, he did not know that his son Ariel, born on February 16, 1940 in Borszczów, was already dead.


 ПРОЛЕТАРИИ ВСЕХ СТРАН, СОЕДИНЯЙТЕСЬ!
 ПРОЛЕТАРІ ВСІХ КРАЇН, ЄДНАЙТЕСЯ!

НАРОДНЫЙ КОМИССАРИАТ
 НАРОДНИЙ КОМІСАРІАТ

ВНУТРЕННИХ ДЕЛ СССР
 ВНУТРІШНІХ СПРАВ СРСР

ОТДЕЛ АКТОВ ГРАЖДАНСКОГО СОСТОЯНИЯ — ВІДДІЛ АКТІВ ГРОМАДЯНСЬКОГО СТАНУ

ПОСВІДКА ПРО НАРОДЖЕННЯ
СВИДЕТЕЛЬСТВО О РОЖДЕНИИ

УА № 915492

Гр. Блументаль
 Гр. Ариель Нахманович
(прізвище — фамилия)
(ім'я і по батькові — имя и отчество)

народився (лась) 16 лютого 1940 р.
 родился (лась) 16 лютого 1940 р.
(пріписом і цифрами: рік, місяць і число — прописью и цифрами: год, месяц и число)

про що в книзі записів актів громадянського стану про народження за 1940 р. 1 числа березня місяця зроблений відповідний запис. № 14

о чем в книге записей актов гражданского состояния о рождении за 1940 г. 1 числа березня м-ца произведена соответствующая запись.

Батьки { Батько Блументаль Нахман Айзикович
 Отец (прізвище, ім'я і по батькові — фамилия, имя и отчество)
 Родители { Мати Блументаль Марія Нахманівна
 Мать (прізвище, ім'я і по батькові — фамилия, имя и отчество)

Місце народження Борисів республіка, край, область
 Место рождения Борисовское Рай Гродо ЗАС республіка, край, область
 Місце реєстрації Борисівське Рай Гродо ЗАС
 Место регистрации Борисовское Рай Гродо ЗАС

М. П. М. П. М. П.
 Зав. Бюро ЗАГС М. П. Діловод
 Зав. Бюро ЗАГС М. П. Делопроизводитель

1939. М. П.

Ariel Blumental's birth certificate (Nachman Blumental Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, courtesy of Miron Blumental and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. © Miron Blumental)

“Bor” is Borszczów (Borszczów County in the Tarnopol Voivodeship), the birthplace of Blumental, a multilingual linguist; an aficionado of Yiddish who collected materials for YIVO in Vilnius (*zamlar*); a certified Polish philologist; a graduate of the University of Warsaw; and after the liberation from German occupation in 1944, co-founder of the Central Jewish Historical Commission (Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna, CŻKH) at the Central Committee of Jews in Poland, and the first director of CŻKH's successor, the Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, ŻIH).

ŻYDOWSKI INSTYTUT HISTORYCZNY przy C. K. ŻYDÓW w POLSCE
יִידִישְׁטער היסטאָרישער אינסטיטוט פֿײַם צ. כ. פֿון ייִדן אין פּוילן
JEWISH HISTORICAL INSTITUTE at the CENTR. COM. of JEWS in POLAND
Konta bankowe: B.G.K. 1666 P.K.O. I-7336 Warszawa, ul. Tłomackie 5, tel. 8-69-59

Warszawa, dn. 20 maja 1949r.

L. dz. 910/49 S.G.

Z a ś w i a d c z e n i e



Żydowski Instytut Historyczny przy C.K.Żydów w Polsce
niniejszym zaświadcza, że mgr Nachman Blumental jest dyrek-
torem Instytutu.-

Zaświadczenie niniejsze wydano wzamian legitymacji
służbowej.-

Ważne do 1 września 1949 roku.-

Sekretarz Generalny

mgr R. Gerber

Wicedyrektor

dr. Kermisz

Letter from the Jewish Historical Institute dated May 20, 1949 certifying that Nachman Blumental is the director of ŻIH (Nachman Blumental Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, courtesy of Miron Blumental and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. © Miron Blumental)

Helena Datner wrote about the importance of work for CŻKH members:

Documenting the Holocaust was a duty towards those who had been murdered, a task that helped survive the loss of everything. The commission was created by historians and people from various professions joined them, convinced that the only thing that made sense to them was work (Datner & Pieńkowska, 2017, p. 88).

Nachman Blumental began documenting the Holocaust after his return to Poland in 1944.

Ewakuacja do Polski

O d p i s

Główny Pełnomocnik
Rządu Ukraińskiej SSR
Polskiego Komitetu Wyzwolenia
Narodowego.

24 grudnia 1944.

KARTA EWAKUACYJNA N.861.

Wydano obywatelowi BLUMENTAL NACHMAN s.Lejby, mieszkańcowi
wsi miasta Borszczów, Tarnopolskiego obwodu, jako dowód, że za
pozwoleniem Głównego Pełnomocnika Rządu Ukraińskiej SSR/Polskie-
go Komitetu Wyzwolenia Narodowego/dla ewakuacji na terytorium
Polski /Ukraińskiej SSR, ewakuuje się do Z a m o s c, obwodu
USSR./województwa Polski/

Wraz z nim ewakuuje się następujących członków jego rodziny

Nazwisko, imię, imię ojca	Stosunek do głowy rodziny	Miesiąc i rok urodzenia	Uwaga
BLUMENTAL NACHMAN s.Lejby	gł. rodz.	1902r.	wymiany dokonano

Obywatel BLUMENTAL NACHMAN s.Lejby przewozi z sobą produktów
żywnościowych 15,0 ctn. w tym przedmiotów użytku domowego 5,0 ctn.

Rejonowy Pełnomocnik dla ewakuacji Czortków/-/Wątkowiak

Przedstawiciel strony Czortków /-/Bzarucha.

Pieczęć: "Główny Pełnomocnik Polskiego Komitetu Wyzwolenia Narodo-
wego, Rejonowy Przedstawiciel do Spraw Ewakuacji". - - - - -

R E P E R T O R I U M Nr. 2352. Dnia czwartego czerwca roku
tysiąc dziesięć czterdziestego siódmego. Ja, Henryk Kles,
Notariusz w Łodzi, mający kancelarię przy ul. Piotrkowskiej 110
w gmachu Hipoteki, zaświadcza zgodność niniejszego odpisu z
jego oryginałem, okazanym mi przez Nachmana Blumentala, zam. w
Łodzi, przy ul. Narutowicza Nr. 32. Od niniejszego pobrano
opłaty skarbowej 10 złotych i opłaty sądowej 60 złotych.



NOTARIUSZ *Henryk Kles*

While traveling around Poland collecting materials on the Holocaust, Blumental was confronted with cities whose Jewish communities had been wiped out. The void in Łódź was etched in his memory:

When in 1944/45 I traveled around the eastern parts of Poland – to the extent that the German troops had moved out of them – I saw a strange sight. The periphery of towns looked pretty much like before the war: the center, where – before the outbreak of war in 1939 – there had been Jewish apartments, synagogues, etc. – was completely destroyed or deserted. Later, when I visited Poland's larger cities, I saw the same thing everywhere: districts, formerly inhabited by Jews, were completely destroyed, like Podzamcze in Lublin, and the site of the Warsaw ghetto – a pile of rubble as if after an earthquake. Łódź looked sadder, there was no damage visible there. The city was hardly affected by hostilities; even the part where the Jews had lived, the future ghetto, had not changed. Same streets, same houses, but one thing was missing – life. No people. [...] A *dead* city?! (Blumental, 1973, p. 20)¹⁴

Nachman Blumental emigrated to Israel in 1950.

II. Nachman Blumental's Testimony: Tracing the Holocaust between the Close-up and the Big Picture

If we think of the Holocaust as a war between Germans and Jews, then we will never understand it.
(Kertész, 2011, p. 48)

The State of Research

Between 1939 and 1945, the German occupiers murdered almost 3 million Polish Jews (nearly 90% of the Jewish population in Poland).¹⁵ Between 40 and 50,000 Polish Jews survived the German occupation (Engelking & Grabowski, 2018, vol. 1, p. 29),¹⁶ most were to be found in Nazi concentration camps and labor camps and in forests where Soviet partisans were active (Janicka, 2018b, p. 133). A minority within this minority survived on the so-called “Aryan” side. Blumental put it this way: “The remnants of Polish Jewry died out while scattered in various corners of the country (concentration and work camps) and in some ghettos”.¹⁷

From the work done by the Polish Center for Holocaust Research (Engelking & Grabowski, 2018), we know that the majority of those who survived the German

14 In Mordechaj Canin's book, there is a similar description of Łódź: “The sight of an undamaged Łódź is more terrible than the ruins of Warsaw. Outside of the Old Town, Łódź is untouched. There are houses, factories, the same streets – but the faces are strange. The conquerors wiped out the Jews and then took over their houses and streets” (Canin, 2019, p. 139).

15 Blumental ascertained that the German occupiers murdered 90 percent of Polish Jews. He also tried to establish the exact number of Jews murdered in the Nazi extermination camps. See N. Blumental, *Coś niecoś o zagadnieniach dotyczących statystyki ofiar Żydów z czasów okupacji niemieckiej*, manuscript, pp. 1–33, Nachman Blumental Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (Blumental, b.d.).

16 As Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski write: “This estimate is important because it [is] related to the number of Jewish refugees who did not manage to survive” (Engelking & Grabowski, 2018, p. 29).

17 Manuscript by Nachman Blumental, no date, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (AŻIH), Central Jewish Historical Commission (CŻKH), 303/292.

Aktionen – i.e. ghetto liquidations characterized by the murder of Jews on the spot, the deportation of most ghetto residents to their deaths – and who attempted to hide on the so-called “Aryan” side, died as a result of direct or indirect activities of their “neighbors” (Gross, 2000). Such was the case with Maria and Ariel Blumental. The tracing of their fate provides a contribution to the microhistory studies of the “new Polish school of Holocaust research” (Kichelewski et. al, 2019; Tokarska-Bakir, 2019b). My approach to the Holocaust, however, differs from the microhistory¹⁸ study *Dalej jest noc* (Engelking & Grabowski, 2018) in terms of the historiographic model, including its methodological and analytical principles. Instead of giving priority to statistics, I place in the foreground Jewish testimonies, in this case Nachman Blumental’s account. My view of this testimony is in harmony with the postulate for a new approach to sources as formulated twenty years ago by Jan Tomasz Gross:

To begin with, I suggest that we should modify our approach to sources for this period. When considering survivors’ testimonies, we would be well advised to change the starting premise in appraisal of their evidentiary contribution from a priori critical to in principle affirmative. By accepting what we read in a particular account as fact *until we find persuasive arguments to the contrary*, we would avoid more mistakes than we are likely to commit by adopting the opposite approach [...]. (Gross, 2000, p. 94)

In Jewish testimonies, it is primarily about conveying the experience of what happened. Knowledge about events requires imparting (see Lanzmann, 2007, p. 52), along with a readiness to listen carefully to voices speaking about the Holocaust experience (see Cobel-Tokarska, 2012, p. 47). My article here is a response to the testimony delivered by Nachman Blumental.

In addition, this article is a contribution to the shared “Polish-Jewish history that divides” (Janicka, 2019a, p. 89), a formulation I use as developed by Elżbieta Janicka. Guided by the perspective of critical theory, I will also analyze “the concrete socio-cultural setting that was an integral part of the crime”.¹⁹ This perspective means adopting a critical attitude towards all cultural phenomena (Löwenthal, 1980, p. 77).

Blumental’s records point to Polish participation in the Holocaust, which was carried out in full public view. These records illuminate the mechanisms of what the Germans called “*Judenjagd*” – the Jew hunt.²⁰ Firstly, the participation of the Polish

18 At the core of microhistory, according to Ginzburg’s understanding, is the idea that “obstacles interfering with the research were constituent elements of the documentation and thus had to become part of the account [...]” (Ginzburg, 1993, p. 23). The word microhistory was first used in a book dedicated to a battle. The title of George R. Stewart’s book is *Pickett’s Charge. A Microhistory of the Final Attack at Gettysburg, July 3, 1863*. After the publication of Primo Levi’s *Il sistema periodico* (1975), “the word *microhistory* entered historical usage, losing, as often happens, its original negative connotation” (Ginzburg, 1993, p. 15).

19 Elżbieta Janicka used this phrase in an interview with Lidia Ostałowska (Janicka & Wilczyk, 2013, p. 93).

20 According to Christopher Browning, the policemen from Hamburg’s Battalion 101 coined the term and used it regularly. In other words, it was part of the way the perpetrators spoke on the ground. It appears only in a few German documents (Browning, 2006, pp. 177–178). As Christopher Browning writes, “[...] the ‘Jew hunt’ was not a brief episode. It was a tenacious, remorseless, ongoing campaign in which the ‘hunters’ tracked down and killed their ‘prey’ in direct and personal confrontation. It was not a passing phase but an existential condition of constant readiness and intention to kill every last Jew who could be found” (Browning, 1992, p. 132). Jan Grabowski emphasizes that “there is no question that this kind of hunt became one of the most important

police,²¹ and secondly, the activities of Polish neighbors and their participation in crimes against Jews. Importantly, these were often “group actions”.²² The Blumental case analyzed here concerns crimes committed at a time when the majority of Polish Jews – women, men and children – were already dead, that majority having been murdered by the Germans in the Nazi extermination camps.

Nachman Blumental did not date his postwar records on the murder of his wife and child. The materiality of the source indicates that these records were created on an ongoing basis – i.e. in the summer of 1948 – during his visit to the murder site or immediately afterward. Blumental made use of blank official forms originating from the bureaucracy of the German occupation, and he wrote hurriedly, on the back of the thin, fragile paper. Such was the case with an entry concerning the Holocaust dated “2.VIII.48”.²³ It was also recorded on the reverse side of one of the German forms. Both records are in Polish.

Some words are illegible because of the paper’s condition and the author’s handwriting. I discovered the records of the Blumental murders in one of the cardboard boxes in which the Blumental archive was stored, and I immediately recognized his handwriting. Miron Blumental, Nachman Blumental’s son, was unaware of the existence of these records buried among thousands of other Holocaust-related documents and testimonies. Thus, by accident, I discovered a document that allows simultaneous insight into micro- and macro-history: evidence of a specific event, of the actions of specific people in specific places during the Holocaust. It is also a window through which one can see what the deaths publicly inflicted on Jews in the provinces looked like after the German occupiers had liquidated almost all of the ghettos. The chain of events followed a repeating pattern. The deaths of Maria Blumental and Ariel Blumental did not have to happen. In the eyes of the participating observers and the Blue Police, however, their deaths were deemed to be a necessity. It seemed to them that death for the mother and child was the only option. The Blumentals were classified as members of a stigmatized group that was being murdered, could be murdered, and should be murdered. The aggression of those who watched and gathered in the final hours of the Blumental family’s life was a part of the event.

tasks of the German police forces in occupied Poland [...] and during the fall and winter of 1942/43 it was, no doubt, their most important task” (Grabowski, 2013, p. 1).

21 The Blue Police (*policja granatowa*) was “an auxiliary formation staffed by Poles in German employ, who would usually beat and rob the helpers and then let them go, while killing the apprehended Jews” (Gross, 2017, p. 19).

22 Justyna Kowalska–Leder points to this phenomenon in the context of “the form of Polish involvement in the Holocaust”, which was described by the doctor and director of the hospital in Szczepieszyn, Zygmunt Klukowski, in his diary (Kowalska–Leder, 2019, p. 279).

23 This document concerns the Holocaust in Galicia. It begins as follows: “In August 1941[?] (before the first action) Chers came to our house and said he was anxious that something might happen at night”. It also refers to Maria and the child. Blumental noted that Maria had heard “from the director of the post office” about the “September action” and that she learned about the “second action from the director”. Place names are illegible. I was able to read, among other things, “Bor.” – that is, Borszczów – and Stanisławów. See Nachman Blumental Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

117.
Tusacwot opowiadając o fali rozkłamania żydów i młodych, którzy przed śmiercią ich
pocisili się: „dla gda”.

Persony opowiadają, że Maria, nie mogła uciec do wsi, nie mogła uciec do wsi, była
młoda, i była, musi mieć pieniądze, musi i t.d., a nie wsi była, nie mogła uciec.
Był natomiast dwóch - po prostu dwóch i trzech. Myślę, że coś było.

Wtedy było, że nie było, nie było, nie było, a był, nie było, a był, nie było,
nie było, nie było. Był, nie było, i nie było, nie było, nie było, nie było, a było,
nie było. Był, nie było, nie było, i nie było, i nie było, i nie było, i nie było,
i nie było, i nie było, i nie było, i nie było, i nie było, i nie było, i nie było.

Też pamiętam, że Maryja i dwóch innych ludzi na dworcu.



Nachman Blumental (wearing glasses) and Józef Kermisz from the Central Jewish Historical Commission during an inspection of the site of the former extermination camp in Chełmno, probably in 1945 (Yad Vashem Archives, signature 1427/358. © Yad Vashem, Photo Archive, Jerusalem)

Maria and Ariel were identified with the imagined “Jew”, i.e. with the phantasm of “the Jew”.²⁴ The phantasmatic figure of “the Jew” structures the way reality is perceived. Those who commit antisemitic violence react to the image of the “Jew” (Lowenthal & Guterman, 1949), the “symbolic Jew” (Tokarska-Bakir, 2008, p. 42) that was widespread in their culture:

What the perpetrators of pogroms find intolerable and rage-provoking, what they react to, is not the immediate reality of Jews, but the image/figure of the “Jew” which circulates and has been constructed in their tradition. The catch, of course, is that one single individual cannot distinguish in any simple way between real Jews and their anti-Semitic image: this image over-determines the way I experience real Jews themselves, and furthermore it affects the way Jews experience themselves. What makes a real Jew that an anti-Semite encounters on the street “intolerable,” what the anti-Semite tries to destroy when he attacks the Jew, the true target of his fury, is this phantasmatic dimension. (Žižek, 2008, pp. 66–67)

In other words, the “Jew” is the object of the imagination of antisemites trying to make reality correspond to a phantasm.²⁵ When it comes to Polish culture²⁶ and tradition, the

24 Antisemitism features a conspiratorial structure of thought (Stoll, 2016). In this structure, which organizes and explains the world, Jews are ascribed unlimited, omnipotent and omnipresent power. The source of this power is imagined as being concealed (Postone, 1988). Nazi phantasms – *Weltjudentum* and *jüdische Weltverschörung* – culminated in the concept of the *Endlösung der Judenfrage*.

25 How does phantasm work? As Maria Janion wrote succinctly: “Reality overcome by an idea. This is exactly how phantasm works” (Janion, 1991, p. 14).

26 Elżbieta Janicka refers to Polish culture “as a culture that is structurally antisemitic” (Janicka, 2019b, p. 43).

works of Maria Janion,²⁷ Bożena Keff (Keff, 2013, 2020), Joanna Tokarska-Bakir (Tokarska-Bakir, 2008), Helena Datner²⁸ and Elżbieta Janicka (Janicka, 2008) show that anti-semitism is an integral part of the dominant concept of community and identity in Poland. This concept is based on an ethno-religious definition that is still in force today²⁹:

The dominant majority [...] did not define Jews as fellow citizens or simply people in extreme need, but identified them with the image of the Jew they imagined: reducing multiplicity to unity, difference to identity. In the ethno-religious (Polish Catholic) understanding of the nation, this phantasmatic Jew is a constitutive enemy, a phantasmatic figure in opposition to which the identity of the majority has been constructed: first the religious majority, then the national. [...] from the perspective of antisemitism as a phenomenon of long duration, the Jew was perceived as a harmful element that had to be removed. (Janicka, 2018b, pp. 138–139)

Attitudes towards Jews during the Holocaust, according to Elżbieta Janicka and Tomasz Żukowski, “reflected the code of Polish culture, which had taken shape much earlier”. Referring to the work of Maria Janion, they continued: “Liquidation phantasms were articulated in Poland even before the war and prepared the social imagination for what would take place in the 1940s [...]. Even children knew about them” (Janicka & Żukowski, 2016, p. 239).³⁰

The works of scholars of cultural criticism show clearly why the term “Polish-Jewish relations” is inappropriate, suggesting as it does the illusion of an encounter at the same level. The term “Polish-Jewish relations” is a cowardly academic formula. Małgorzata Melchior (Melchior, 2013) and Elżbieta Janicka proposed that the term be disused. Janicka deconstructed it in the context of Polish culture, which she described as anti-semitic:

Antisemitic culture means a distribution of roles that usually escapes attention. When we use the term “Polish-Jewish relations”, which suggests partnership and a symmetry between two groups, we often lose sight of the fact that it refers to relations between a majority and a minority, between the discriminators and the discriminated, between those who were excluding and those who were being excluded and who were, in the end, excluded. (Janicka, 2014–2015, p. 68)

27 Maria Janion shows that Poland at the beginning of the nineteenth century “was a place where antisemitic attitudes emerged, sometimes containing eliminationist ideas” (Janion, 2009, p. 107). In addition, Janion shows that the journalism of 1930s Poland contained “imagination phantasms” of the extermination of Jews (Janion, 2000, pp. 144–145).

28 Helena Datner writes that antisemitism, as a cultural phenomenon, “is a social norm in Poland” (Datner, 2018, p. 255).

29 As Jerzy Jedlicki emphasized in a text published for the first time in 2004, “without this mythical Jew, who rules the world from his hiding place, there could not have been, and to this day cannot be, the mental landscape of the Polish nationalist, of the obviously sincere patriot and Catholic, and every conversation with him, no matter the subject it starts off with, will end with the Jew” (Jedlicki, 2019, p. 120). Bożena Keff points out that “Polish contemporary ‘antisemitism without Jews’ indicates a mythical reservoir of ideas about the ‘Jew’” (Keff, 2015, p. 502). In order to fight against antisemitism, it is therefore necessary to deconstruct the phantasmatic “Jew” and make people aware that antisemitism is a pathological construction.

30 Elżbieta Janicka locates the Holocaust on the antisemitic continuum: “The history of the Holocaust is an idea that begins with antisemitism” (Janicka, 2008, p. 239).

From the point of view of semiotics, “culture produces codes, and these produce behaviors” (Pasolini, 2012, p. 242). We know from sociological research, however, that there is a gap between attitude and action. An attitude does not automatically lead to action.³¹ Regarding the German perpetrators, sociologist Stefan Kühl – in his reinterpretation of the history of Police Battalion 101 – shows that belonging to an organization³² as well as the basic antisemitic and racist consensus (Kühl, 2016, p. 51) in German society (Bauer, 2001, p. 105) are the missing link between attitude and action, i.e. killing. In other words, an anti-Semitic consensus is required, which also existed in Polish society.³³ According to Blumental’s records, the Blue Policemen and neighbors met on the “footbridge”³⁴ of the antisemitic consensus. On what was this based, and how did it manifest itself during the events which took place during the Holocaust and in subsequent statements made by the “participating observers” concerning their behavior?

In order to describe the Polish context of the Holocaust, Elżbieta Janicka proposes two categories: “the frame” instead of the periphery and “participating observers” instead of witnesses. She writes that “the mere presence of the so-called passive observers was the most basic form of agency or even perpetration. This factor had a decisive impact on the fate of many victims who, because of this, were deprived of the possibility of escaping or hiding or remaining hidden” (Janicka, 2018b, p. 137). In Janicka (2018), we read: “*patrzyli wszyscy*” – everyone was watching (Janicka, 2018b, p. 138). In Blumental (1948), practically the same: “*wszyscy patrzyli*”.

Based on the example of Władysław Pasikowski’s film *Pokłosie*, Elżbieta Janicka shows how the “great quantifier” works (Janicka, 2018a, pp. 19–22): producing Jewish death requires cooperation on the part of everyone: “In order for Józek to be stretched on the barn door as the Jew, everyone has to lend a hand” (Janicka, 2018a, p. 20). In *Pokłosie*, the violence is collective. “Everyone is responsible”³⁵ for it, both for producing the phantasmatic “Jew” and for killing a person: “Everyone was needed to produce and kill the Jew” (Janicka, 2018a, p. 24).

31 “Sociology is certain of one thing: political attitudes do not automatically lead to politically motivated actions” (Kühl, 2016, p. 56). Kühl is referring here to the work of LaPierre (LaPierre, 1934).

32 The starting point for Kühl is “the observation that more than 99 percent of all killings of Jews were committed by members of state enforcement agencies” (Kühl, 2016, pp. 6–7).

33 As for the attitude of the vast majority of Polish society towards Jews, Jan T. Gross shows that in Poland during the German occupation – with some exceptions – “the entire underground press has a more or less anti-Jewish stance” (Gross, 1986, p. 25).

34 I am referring here to the wording of Karski’s report, drawn up “during his first courier trip from occupied Poland to the seat of General Władysław Sikorski’s government, then residing in France in the town of Angers” (Gross, 2014, p. 682). In 1939, Jan Karski wrote: “The [Polish] nation hates its mortal enemy, the Germans, but the Jewish question creates something like a narrow footbridge where Germany and a large part of Polish society meet”. Karski’s first report was published in the historical journal *Mówią Wieki*, 1992(202, 4). *Gazeta Wyborcza* reprinted it on November 15, 2014. https://wyborcza.pl/magazyn/1,124059,16968064,Zagadnienie_zydowskie_w_Polsce_pod_okupacjami.html.

35 Janicka writes: “[...] in Pasikowski we see precisely, based on specific examples, that the fact that everyone is responsible does not mean that no one is responsible, but that everyone is responsible” (Janicka, 2018a, p. 21).

III. Producing the “Jew” and the Spectacle of Death: Consequences of the Antisemitic Consensus

The fact of the death of Jews at the hands of a particular, usually German murderer, or visible signs – such as ghetto walls or gas chambers – do not reflect the essence of the process that took place in the social fabric of occupied Poland. I would call this process “working toward the Holocaust”, inspired by Ian Ker-shaw’s phrase: *working toward the Führer*. (Janicka, 2018b, p. 143)

Recognizing the “Jew”

The participation of the dominant majority in the Holocaust consisted in what Elżbieta Janicka terms “the social ritual of recognizing the Jew towards those who tried to survive on the so-called Aryan side” (Janicka, 2018b, p. 137). This was a common practice, one which involved the perception of a specific person according to a racist pattern. From that person emerges a real Jew, and from a real Jew emerges the phantasmatic Jew. “The production of the Jew – known as recognition – consisted in imposing upon an individual the phantasmatic Jew. In this way, the object of vision was equipped not only with a set of features, but also with an instruction manual” (Janicka, 2019b, p. 44). It is worth considering the meaning of the word “recognition”. Elżbieta Janicka explains:

In the Polish language of the occupation, the verb *rozpoznać* – “to recognize” – did not mean to “identify someone whom one had already met”, but to “identify someone as the phantasmatic Jew”. The “recognition” of those fighting for survival on the so-called Aryan side was a murderous antisemitic ritual practiced individually and collectively, for money and “selflessly”. Those who did it for money, jewelry and other goods were called “*szmalcownicy*”, and “*szmalcownictwo*” was an informal, but popular and lucrative profession. Blackmail was based on alternatives: money or death (by handing the Jew over to the Polish police or German authorities). Both forms of “recognition” – for “selfless” reasons and for money – posed a mortal danger to the victims. The first followed the second. Stripping Jews of money, jewelry, and other things was no minor crime because it meant depriving them of any chance of survival. The condition for being able to take advantage of the Polish “business of help” was the possession of significant financial resources. (Janicka, 2020, p. 83, note 53)

While the Germans classified Jews on the basis of the Nuremberg Laws and by marking them physically and through items of traditional clothing, especially in the case of men, Poles classified them on the basis of a sensitivity and intuition that was difficult to define. Miron Białoszewski writes about this in his *Pamiętnik z powstania warszawskiego*, based on the example of a Jewish woman, Stefa, who lived for two years in the Białoszewski family home at 40 Chłodna Street in Warsaw. Until the spring of 1944: “Stefa had a Kennkarte under the name of Zosia; a little older than her, but she was dyed anyway, not so much redhead as looking reddish, still similar to a Jewish woman, but luckily the Germans couldn’t tell [...]” (Białoszewski, 2008, p. 15). The caretaker, however, could tell. She told Miron Białoszewski’s mother one day: “When she walks across the yard, she crooks her head and somehow walks sideways, oh, you can see from a distance that she is such a Jew” (Białoszewski, 2008, p. 17). For this reason, Stefa could no

longer live with the Białoszewski family. In other words: “those who decided to hide Jews hid them above all from their neighbors” (Janicka & Żukowski, 2012, p. 15). The Germans were not ubiquitous, especially in the provinces of occupied Poland. Cael Perechodnik noted that most of the Jews “reasoned” in the following way: “you can hide from the gendarmes, avoid them, after all there aren’t many of them in the streets, but how can you hide from Poles who can easily distinguish Jews from Poles” (Perechodnik, 2018, p. 48). In the eyes of the dominant majority, Jews “possessed a stigma” (Goffman, 1986, p. 3)³⁶ expressed in specific antisemitic attributes and resulting in exclusion from – to use the terminology of the sociologist Erving Goffman – “the *normals*” (Goffman, 1986, p. 5, emphasis in original). “The special situation of the stigmatized is that society tells him he is a member of the wider group” (Goffman, 1986, p. 123).

Neighbors had a rich repertoire of words for Jews hiding on the so-called “Aryan” side. According to Nachman Blumental, the following words were particularly common: “Actor”, “Englishman”, “Artist”, “Bedouins”, “White”, “Chinese”, “Peasants”, “Częstochowaian”, “Boar”, “Dyed”, “French”, “Spaniard”, “Jacek”, “Dachshund”, “Cadet”, “Hatter”, “Cat”, “Spit”, “Little head” (Łebek), “Skier”, “Negro”, “Bedbug”, “Similar [one]”, “Poodle”, “Romanian”, “Tyrolean”, “Villager”, “Italian” and “people of the Mosaic persuasion” (Blumental, n.d.-b, pp. 1–4). Blumental points out that “a Jew’s value was assessed based on the needs of the time, defined as a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ appearance”. From this perspective, the “worse-looking” Jews were “blemished” (Blumental, n.d.-b, p. 3). In other words, the possibility of hiding Jews using “Aryan papers” – i.e. functioning under an assumed identity – was dependent on meeting the criteria established by the dominant majority (Janicka, 2014–2015, p. 162) regarding appearance, language skills, and cultural know-how. As Jacek Leociak writes, “it was about appearance, good use of the Polish language (i.e. without an accent, but also without excessive correctness), knowledge of Catholic customs and rituals (prayers, participation in the liturgy, the holiday calendar)” (Leociak, 2012 p. 42). Cultural pressure was enormous. What it meant for the practices and behavior of the excluded trying to survive on the so-called “Aryan” side is described by the narrator of *Żydowska Wojna* [The Jewish War] by Henryk Grynberg (Grynberg, 1965).

The crimes committed against Jews during the Holocaust demonstrate that “the attitudes of ‘doing nothing,’ ‘non-interest,’ and ‘non-involvement’ are absent in the repertoire of behaviors available due to the scale of violence that the extermination of Jews unleashed during the Holocaust within the shared space” (Gross, 2014, p. 886). Maria Blumental and Ariel Blumental’s neighbors were involved – as evidenced by their behavior – and interested – as evidenced by the comments they made on an ongoing basis and later recorded by Blumental. The concept of participating observers thus provides the analytical framework for the interpretation of his records. The task of reconstruction and deconstruction involves reading both what is said and what is not said.

36 Goffman writes: “The term stigma, then, will be used to refer to an attribute that is deeply discrediting, but it should be seen that a language of relationships, not attributes, is really needed” (Goffman, 1986, p. 3).

Before the Arrest: A “Dangerous Place”³⁷ on the “Aryan Side”

For Jews, the “Aryan side” was a place of struggle for survival. “The possession of money” – for housing, food and “Aryan papers” – “was the dominant precondition for the possibility of going to the ‘Aryan side’ and starting a life in hiding” (Leociak, 2012, p. 42). When it comes to the topographies of hiding on the “Aryan side”, Jacek Leociak mentions three places: “the city (tenement houses), the countryside (farm buildings) and the forest (dugouts, family camps)” (Leociak, 2012, p. 42).

Maria Blumental, who had a university degree – she worked as a French teacher³⁸ and received a doctorate from the Jagiellonian University³⁹ – was hiding in an area she knew well. She probably counted on the idea that it would be easier for her to survive where her brother Maurycy Tewel lived with his family.⁴⁰ He was a lawyer who practiced in an atmosphere of antisemitic violence against lawyers.⁴¹ In 1937, in Tarnów, he married a Catholic woman named Felicja Bawół,⁴² having first converted to Christianity given that it was impossible to contract a civil marriage in these parts of Poland.⁴³ According to the findings of Tomasz Frydel, “marriage between the attorney from Dębica, Maurycy Tewel, and Felicja Bawół, which had been concluded before the war, did not save the husband, who died in Auschwitz, but provided the basis for saving Jewish friends” (Frydel, 2018, p. 435). Frydel writes that “Felicja Tewel’s home in Dębica served as an address for many Jewish refugees” (Frydel, 2018, p. 435, note 211). From the 1989 account of Felicja Tewel-Bartczak, submitted as part of the procedure for awarding her the title of “Righteous Among the Nations” by Yad Vashem, we know that her husband’s sister Maria Blumental, along with Ariel and a friend of Maria Blumental with her son,

37 “Premodern antisemitism, religious, ethnic and social in the symbolic narrative, marked out for them [Jews] a truly ‘dangerous place’ that could disappear from the face of the earth at any moment. [...] The premodern eye [...], ‘without emotion’, could only observe how well-deserved punishment fell on the Jews [...], not so much their lives, but most of all their death as ‘part of God’s eternal order on earth’” (Tokarska-Bakir, 2004, p. 66).

38 This information was provided by the niece of Maria Blumental, Jadwiga Tewel-Fluderska. USC Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive (VHA), 36638, Jadwiga Tewel-Fluderska’s account in Polish, September 19, 1997.

39 In 1928, the Jagiellonian University awarded her a doctoral degree for the work entitled “Biblia u Romantyków”. I found this doctoral diploma in the Blumental archive.

40 As Jan Grabowski writes, “it was easier to get help in your hometown. At least that’s what many Jews initially thought. Very often, everything depended on the decision whether someone stayed in their hometown or left for the unknown” (Grabowski, 2020, pp. 186–187).

41 Here is an example from 1928. Following the antisemitic attacks on Joseph Auber, his appointment as judge was withdrawn. Anonymous letters with antisemitic content have been preserved. In one letter we read that appointing Auber to Dębica would be “strengthening the element hostile to the State. – Even a partitioning power would not impose such a humiliation of national and religious dignity and feelings that we should swear on a crucifix in front of a Jew!” (cited in Zaremba Bielawski, 2018, p. 134).

42 In news from the cathedral parish number 13, issued in Tarnów on April 4, 1937, we read: “They were married: 1) Maurycy Tewel from Tarnów with Felicja Bawół from Tarnów”. Emphasis in original – K.S.

43 Jadwiga Tewel-Fluderska, the daughter of Maurycy Tewel and Felicja Tewel, who was a child during the German occupation (she was born on March 7, 1938 in Dębica), confirmed this in an interview with the USC Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive (VHA), 36638, Jadwiga Tewel-Fluderska’s account in Polish, September 19, 1997: “My father had to be baptized and they married in a church in Tarnów”. <https://vha.usc.edu/viewing-Page?testimonyID=38507&returnIndex=1>

stayed with Felicja for some time.⁴⁴ The women and their sons, along with a tailor named Winter, were ultimately robbed of the possibility of remaining in hiding:

In January 1943, while at the post office, I was arrested and taken to the Gestapo. After being searched, I was released. After returning home, I alerted my husband and 5 Jews who were with us [urging them] to leave, because there might be a search, but they [...] were not going to leave us. It was my husband's sister Maria Blumental with her son and her friend Łozińska with her son [,] both came from Borszczów,⁴⁵ [also] the tailor Winter. My husband only got dressed and removed the compromising papers, but it was too late because when they opened the door [...] the Gestapo barged in and arrested my husband. There were terrible cries and screams from the whole family, especially from my 4-year-old daughter. The Gestapo became disoriented and, having taken only my husband, carried out no further search. (AŻIH, Yad Vashem, 349/24/1453, p. 2)

This account by Felicja Tewel-Bartczak (née Bawół) lacks information on what preceded the Gestapo violence. One of the neighbors or friends of the couple Maurycy Tewel and Felicja Bawół in Dębica must have “recognized” the people living with them as Jews and thus had denounced them. As stated by Jadwiga Tewel-Fluderska, the daughter of Maurycy Tewel: “Certainly, someone must have informed. Absolutely no doubt. The German, when he came to arrest my father, said: ‘We are not interested in particular individuals, but someone told us that there was a Jew here’. We do not know who that *someone* was”.⁴⁶

The name Bawół appears at the beginning of Blumental's records, in the first paragraph on the first page (“I.”), in the fourth sentence. Blumental attempts a precise reconstruction of his wife and child's fate after their escape from the sister-in-law's home. The records start like this:

Brzeziny (approx. 15 km from x⁴⁷). The first farm this side of Dębica. Stasiowska Kazia. She was a liaison between Maria and the Bawółs. She says that at the beginning M. and Ariel were in Brzeziny at Wodzisza for about two months; later they returned to Dębica. Then she brought Maria on foot (Ariel stayed with “grandma” in Dębica). She was then with x [Szydla, Szydha, Szymka?]⁴⁸ (a few weeks) and later brought Maria with the Child, they were with her brother-in-law Wojtek in Mała (a few km from Brzeziny). They were there a couple of days. (The original document forms part of the Nachman Blumental Collection in YIVO Institute for Jewish Research)

The village of Brzeziny is in Dębica County, 5 km west of Wielopole Skrzyńskie. Brzeziny is adjacent to Wielopole and the village of Mała. There is a profusion of birch trees. Though Brzeziny, in terms of space, could have been an ideal hiding place for Maria Blumental and others seeking shelter and rescue, the residents' attitudes thwarted their attempts to survive. On the border of Mała and Brzeziny there is a “Monument to Christ the King”.

44 Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (AŻIH), Yad Vashem, 349/24/1453, Felicja Tewel-Bartczak's account.

45 I have not yet been able to establish when this happened.

46 USC Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive (VHA), 36638, Jadwiga Tewel-Fluderska's account in Polish, September 19, 1997.

47 Illegible due to tear in original document.

48 Commentary by Elżbieta Janicka.



Monument to Christ the King in Mała (photo by Jos Stübner, July 2, 2020, courtesy of the same. © Jos Stübner)



Monument to Christ the King in Mała (photo by Jos Stübner, July 2, 2020, courtesy of the same. © Jos Stübner)

According to its plaque, the monument is 17 meters high. The figure of Christ was erected in 1937. Like the church in Brzeziny, it towers above the entire area. The persecution and murder of those in hiding took place in a public space typically full of signs of the Catholic religion. Nachman Blumental saw all these signs when visiting the area in the summer of 1948. On the street that leads through the village of Brzeziny, there is an installation with a statue of the Virgin Mary conspicuously in the center. It is in good condition despite its age and is protected by four linden trees.

We do not learn from Blumental's records why Maria and Ariel Blumental had to leave their hiding places with Wodzisz and with somebody called "Wojtek". It remains unclear whether it was because of a lack of money⁴⁹ and threats from the hosts, or because of threats from other people in the vicinity. Generally speaking, "the feeling of being threatened by Polish fellow citizens was a constant part of what Jews in hiding experienced" (Grabowski, 2011, p. 36). After a few months, Maria and Ariel Blumental had nowhere left to escape to. The moments just before their arrest can be described as an experience of complete loneliness.

49 Jan Grabowski emphasizes that "the chances for survival for Jews without financial resources were extremely poor. Adequate resources or credible promises of postwar compensation were essential, although not always sufficient, guarantees of survival" (Grabowski, 2013, p. 144).



The Patroness of Brzeziny (photo by Katrin Stoll, July 2, 2020)

Arrest: Inspection of Papers and Body, or the Production of an Identity Signifying Death

Looking for help on the “Aryan side”, Maria assumed the identity of a Catholic Polish woman. Blumental’s findings indicate that she had “Aryan papers”.⁵⁰ We do not know for sure if she also had in her possession a baptismal certificate⁵¹ or the crucifix that I found in the Blumental archives.

Participating observers and policemen determined that she and Ariel were Jews.⁵² In Nachman Blumental’s records we read:

The Blue Policemen carried out a search. They came upon Maria and the child by the grove. Maria identified herself and the policemen x [verb: *odebrali* (picked up), *oddali* (handed over), *chodzili* (went), though it seems that, at the beginning, there is *ch*, and at the end *bili*, thus *ch...bili*?]⁵³ x [maybe a name starting with *W-*, *Wich-*, *Windisch*?]⁵⁴ turned to check if Ariel is a Jew. The policemen were Kapeluch (he’s behind bars in Tarnów) and Jakij (escaped). Was Długosz⁵⁵ also a policeman there (?) [the question mark in brackets is Nachman Blumental’s, as are the square brackets]⁵⁶ [Was my wife’s passport under the name Wróbel Zofia? (?) – the name Kostołowa, who allowed her to steal her passport. She put it on the window overlooking the yard, my wife, leaving her apartment, took it. This is what Kostołowa told me].⁵⁷

They “carried out a search” and “They came upon [...]” The words used by the participating observers recorded by Blumental are in keeping with the perception and description of the reality that normalizes the persecution of Jews and excludes several important elements from the narrative: first, the fact that the Blue Police operation must have been preceded by a denunciation. Second, the fact that Maria and Ariel Blumental’s arrest was the result of specific acts of antisemitic violence and the activity on

50 “Actions taken by Jews hiding on ‘Aryan papers’ were aimed at their own survival, though they were, at the same time, an attempt to oppose (more often individual than collective and organized) the Nazi occupiers” (Melchior, 2004, p. 23). As Dan Michman writes, “a conscious choice to live must be considered an act of resistance” (Michman, 2003, p. 222).

51 As part of field research in Dębica and its vicinity (June 30 – July 4, 2020), I asked priests from the Roman Catholic St. Jadwiga parish in Dębica, and the St. Nicholas parish in Brzeziny, to check whether there is an annotation about the baptism of Maria Blumental in the books of *Liber Natorum* (Catholic ecclesiastical birth registry) from the time of the German occupation. According to the priests’ findings – I was not permitted to look through the baptism book, but I was present during the inspection – there is no entry concerning her baptism. A priest in Brzeziny commented on the lack of a baptismal entry for Maria Blumental’s with the following words: “She was turned in”. This comment proves that the priests know very well what it was like and what role faithful Christians played in the crime against the Jews, including those who belonged, and whose descendants still belong, to their parish.

52 Invoking Jewishness is a term used by Elżbieta Janicka. “The right to look was founded on the right to produce the Jew. The participating observer invoked the perception of Jewishness, as one invokes order” (Janicka, 2018b, p. 141).

53 Commentary by Elżbieta Janicka.

54 Commentary by Elżbieta Janicka.

55 Józef Długosz from Wielopole was the mayor. This information is provided by Father Julian Śmietana from Wielopole in his memoirs. See Father Julian Śmietana, *Proboszcz. Z przeszłości Wielopola*, Wielopole 1977. Manuscript. A copy of the manuscript is available at the Muzeum Tadeusza Kantora in Wielopole.

56 Commentary by Elżbieta Janicka.

57 The original document can be found in the Nachman Blumental Collection in the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. I quote from Elżbieta Janicka’s transcription from December 2018.

the part of neighbors – not the result of a chance meeting during some “walk”⁵⁸ in the woods, as Felicja Tewel’s daughter suggested in 1997:

Jadwiga Tewel-Fluderska:

The man she was hiding with just said she didn’t want to be shut-in. If she hadn’t left the house and gone, they wouldn’t have caught and shot her.

Zofia Zaks:

How did it happen? Where did she go, I mean [...]?

Tewel-Fluderska:

She took the child and went for a walk. She went out. She went for a walk in the woods.

Zofia Zaks:

That means [...] it was not like someone_

Tewel-Fluderska [shakes her head negatively and interrupting Zofia Zaks]:

No, not [...] in the woods. She left the house with the child in broad daylight, she just went for a walk. She couldn’t stand being shut-in. And there was a manhunt in the woods, someone I do not know. Anyway, the Germans hunted there. And they swept them up, took them to the cars, she came with the child, with the boy at the last moment.

Zofia Zaks:

And this is also what the ladies know from that farmer?

Tewel-Fluderska [nodding]:

From the farmer she was hiding with. So if she hadn’t left, because apparently they weren’t looking for anyone, except in the woods. If she hadn’t left, she would have been_

Zofia Zaks:

But was it a raid on the Home Army, partisans, or Jews, or what?

Jadwiga Tewel-Fluderska:

We don’t know. In any case, they were making a roundup with dogs for someone, perhaps the Home Army, because there was also one Home Army group there, though only by chance.

Zofia Zaks:

And this farmer was a witness to this?

Jadwiga Tewel-Fluderska:

He was. [...] ⁵⁹

Jadwiga Tewel-Fluderska repeated the farmer’s antisemitic narrative, according to which blame lay with the Jews. Maria’s niece said nothing about the fact that Maria Blumental was forced to leave her hiding place at the farmer’s because it was no longer safe. Zofia Zaks’s attempt to deconstruct this narrative was unsuccessful. The self-image of the neighbor as an innocent witness who was not involved in the crime against Maria and Ariel Blumental was maintained. This part of the account reveals the level of complicity in Polish society and the compulsion to turn away from the reality of the Holocaust and the truth of the participation of neighbors in the persecution and murder of Polish Jews. In Jadwiga Tewel-Fluderska’s narrative about the hunting of her aunt and

58 This narrative was disseminated by the owner of the farm where Maria and the child were hiding. In this way, he blamed her, deflecting at the same time from his own responsibility for their deaths and the role played by the Blue Policemen. Maria Blumental’s niece did not question the farmer’s narrative. Jadwiga Tewel-Fluderska uncritically repeated it and supported it in a conversation with Zofia Zaks for the Shoah Foundation. According to the insightful interpretation of Grzegorz Niziołek, she succumbed to “false transcendence” (Niziołek, 2019, p. 3). Bożena Keff interprets this term in her work. It implies ascribing to Germans the ability to be omnipresent and “the power to be present always and everywhere, to exercise omnipresence” (Keff, 2020, p. 6). The mechanism of “false transcendence” is a tool and a kind of mystification: “Unreality becomes reality, and reality is unspoken, like the fact that the king has no clothes” (Keff, 2020, p. 22).

59 USC Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive (VHA), 36638, Jadwiga Tewel-Fluderska’s account in Polish, September 19, 1997.

her cousin, only the Germans feature. Tewel-Fluderska suggests that Maria Blumental caused the *Judenjagd* situation: “If she hadn’t left the house and gone, they wouldn’t have caught and shot her”. The antisemitic violence of the environment and the persecution on the part of co-perpetrators are not included in this narrative. The majority narrative about the Holocaust and the status of the neighbors as passive “witnesses” is officially legitimized, not dismantled. As Elżbieta Janicka writes, the narrative about the Polish witness is turned “against the victims”. It works “on the basis of passive aggression”, and is a way of “avoiding confrontation with the Holocaust and antisemitism” (Janicka, 2018b, p. 144). There was no passivity in this environment. For Blumental’s wife and son, such passivity would have been life-giving.

The policemen controlled the existence of the persecuted and excluded them from the community and from humanity. Having checked “if Ariel is a Jew”, the Blue Policemen Wilhelm Jaki and Józef Kapelusz performed the “symbolic equation” (Hanna Segal)⁶⁰: they identified a symbol with an object.⁶¹ For them, the circumcised penis *is* the phantasmatic “Jew”. The word “Jew” was a “symbolic converter” (Janicka, 2018c, p. 42). The policemen defined a person – a three-year-old child – as “the Jew”. This definition, which has three stages: “man – real Jew – imagined Jew” (Janicka, 2018c, p. 42), reflects the dominant culture:

A [collective] gaze, whose construction reflects the entire cultural system with its social hierarchy identical with the hierarchy of power and the hierarchy of values. This is a gaze which a) identifies a person as the Jew, b) converts a real Jew into the fantasized Jew with service instructions assigned to him, c) confirms the German Nazi judgment in the second instance, making service instructions with no alternative. (Janicka, 2018c, p. 52)

The policemen treated Ariel as if he were identical to the imaginary “Jew.” Seeing only the phantasmatic “Jew”, the policemen sentenced Ariel and Maria to death. In other words: symbolic equating is the mechanism that triggers antisemitic violence.

To understand how the process of stigmatizing Ariel and turning him into the phantasmatic “Jew” works, it is necessary to realize that, as Erving Goffman emphasizes, “the normal and the stigmatized” are not actual persons but “perspectives”, which “are generated in social situations”⁶² (Goffman, 1986, p. 138). Goffman proposes a relational definition of stigma: “A stigma, then, is really a special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype” (Goffman, 1986, p. 4). The stigma is therefore socially con-

60 “I came gradually to the conclusion that one could differentiate between two kinds of symbol-formation and symbolic function. In one, which I have called *symbolic equation*, and which underlies schizophrenic concrete thinking, the symbol is so equated with the object symbolized that the two are felt to be identical” (Segal, 2004, p. 52).

61 In her article on the figure of the bloodsucker, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir explained the basis of this violent operation: “The operation of literalisation, as in Hanna Segal’s symbolic equation, consists in the pathological ‘equating (identifying) of the symbol with the object it represents. As a result of this process, a real object with (unconscious) symbolic meaning ceases to be recognized by an individual as what it actually is [...], but transforms literally into what it symbolizes” (cited in Tokarska-Bakir, 2010, p. 35, note 63).

62 “The normal and the stigmatized are not persons but rather perspectives. These are generated in social situations during mixed contacts by virtue of the unrealized norms that are likely to play upon the encounter” (Goffman, 1986, p. 138).

structured – that is, within specific interactions. In our case, the attribute is circumcision. The decisive factor was not circumcision as such, but the perception of circumcision. Only the perception of this attribute through an antisemitic prism⁶³ will make circumcision a symbol of a stigma – that is, an element which, as a result of perception, becomes a discrediting element.

Ariel Blumental is not seen as a child who has a right to live, but as the embodiment of the phantasmatic “Jew”, the embodiment of the anti-world and anti-national Catholic community. This perception is shaped by an antisemitic pattern of thought that is socially structured and works in such a way that Jews are not viewed as humans. The perception of Ariel Blumental’s body fits this pattern. Goffman writes: “By definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human. On that assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances” (Goffman, 1986, p. 5).

The police officers’ act of stigmatizing an individual as the “Jew” during the Holocaust was an act of producing an identity that signifies death. Maria Blumental’s narrative was not able to break the antisemitic perception of producing the “Jew” as an element to be removed.

The Blue Policemen confirmed the production of the identity of the “Jew” by the participating observers. In other words, recognition of the “Jew” by the Blue Policemen was preceded by the recognition of the “Jew” by the participating observers. Maria and Ariel were socially recognized as Jews. We are dealing here with a collective action.

An “old Woman” attributes the phantasmatic notion of being “the Jew” to the child. She views him through an antisemitic prism: “If not for the child, your Wife would be alive,” as was noted down by Blumental. We are dealing here with a phantasmatic perception of reality. The “old Woman” considered Ariel to be the “Jew”, she saw him through the lens of a phantasm. There was consensus among participating observers that Ariel was a Jew and therefore had to die, as did his mother. An unspecified contract due to objectifying gaze. All those present agreed that Ariel was a harmful element. The “old Woman” did not have to check whether the others had come to the same conclusion. She could assume they would all perform the same mental operation. They made an object out of a child. From their perspective, Ariel Blumental was the “Jew”, so he had no right to live. This example shows that there was a “coupling”⁶⁴ between the German-Nazi *Endlösung* project and the “local socio-cultural context” (Janicka, 2013, p. 68).

In summation, the presence of participating observers caused Maria and Ariel Blumental to be deprived first of the possibility of being hidden, and then of the possibility of

63 In the materials for Marcel Łoziński’s film *Świadkowie* (Witnesses) on the pogrom in Kielce, Władysław Dzikowski says: “Jews before the war: what they were really like is not important, it is only important how we saw them. We saw the Jews as complete villains” (cited in Tokarska-Bakir, 2018, p. 230).

64 “This coupling can be described as synergy – the interaction of factors that mutually enhance their effectiveness. This explains why what is at stake in the Polish story of the Holocaust is the image of Poland and Poles” (Janicka, 2013, pp. 68–69).

escaping. Blue Policemen, Germans and participating observers at the crime scene acted together according to the principle that “*a Jew seen in public must die*” (Keff, 2020, p. 58).⁶⁵ It is the result of what I would call the objectifying gaze of the perpetrator and the participating observers. A gaze (Janicka, 2014–2015, p. 170) which turns a human being – woman, man or child – into the “Jew”. While “the ‘Jew’ is a metaphysical Jew, supra-individual, individuals are, in turn, its representations, from infants to old people” (Keff, 2020, p. 59).

At the Blue Police Station – That is, in Public View

The station is the scene of another act of violence in the staged-managed event. The building in which the police station was located is still standing today. It is located next to the Catholic Church. The police station was visible from the square in front of the church (where, today, there is a parking lot).

The action moves from the proscenium to the stage. Everyone who is present – Polish policemen, participating observers, Germans – behaved in a way that created a situation which left no way out for Maria and Ariel Blumental. It was a death trap. The “old Woman” tells Blumental:

She [Maria Blumental – K.S.] was brought to the station in the morning; she was sitting upstairs in the school building (the police were there at the time); the child was playing there; jumping on and off a couch. The Polish policemen could not watch; they left. They talked about it; they brought bread. – If not for the child, your Wife would be alive. They wanted to let [them] go. The German gendarme said they did not have to be brought in. They should have been allowed to get away. [...]

It appears that the Blue Police officers brought Maria and Ariel Blumental to the station shortly after their arrest to report their capture. What happened at the police station? Policemen and participating observers work together and then interact with each other. Participating observers acknowledge that the policemen have recognized Jews, and the policemen accept this recognition.

Police officers keep the victims under close observation and control. They tell participating observers about the child’s behavior. They, in turn, describe and comment on the behavior of policemen. Reconstructing and interpreting the event, everyone simultaneously co-creates and legitimizes it.⁶⁶ At the same time, the policemen and participating observers deny their agency and responsibility for the violence and for the course that the event takes (“The Polish policemen could not watch; they left”). In this way, they create an image of their own innocence, even sensitivity. The victims play the role of the guilty (“If not for the child, your Wife would be alive”), the role of the “responsible editor” (Perechodnik, 2018, p. 144) is played by a German gendarme called in by the policemen.

⁶⁵ Emphasis in original – K.S.

⁶⁶ The basis for this phenomenon is clearly seen in Zofia Nałkowska’s stories “Kobieta cmentarna” (The Cemetery Lady) and “Przy torze kolejowym” (By the Railroad Tracks).

Interestingly, the German articulates one of the policemen's possibilities: they could have set Ariel and Maria free. Instead of choosing this scenario, the policemen separated the mother from the child, questioned and humiliated Maria with gestures they viewed as an act of assistance ("they brought bread"). During the interrogation, did the policemen force her to testify about other Jews hiding on the "Aryan side"? There is no evidence for this, but it is possible that it also involved attempting to squeeze out information on this subject – by virtue of antisemitic logic, all Jews are somehow related.

In the murder of the Nachman Blumental family, the Blue Policemen have the initiative. They decide and act without hesitation. From the beginning to the end. They call on the German to carry out the execution, who at first hesitates. At the police station, he tries to stop the course of events in order to avoid the murder of a woman and a child. According to the old woman, "the German gendarme said they did not have to be brought in. They should have been allowed to get away". This means that he realized that the concept of the necessity of Jewish death was constructed and produced by the neighbors. According to Blumental, a carpenter says that "the sergeant major Windisch (from Vienna) did not want to do this. He wanted to send my Wife to Dębica. He phoned there, but he was ordered to shoot her". It seems that Windisch needed an order from another German before agreeing to act on the Blue Policemen's urgings. Completely in line with the statement by Leon Kruczkowski from the drama entitled *Niemcy*, staged many times in postwar Poland: "For a German, conscience is another German" (Kruczkowski, 1964, p. 16).



View from the parking lot of the building in Wielopole Skrzyńskie which housed the Blue Police station during the German occupation (photo by Katrin Stoll, July 1, 2020)



Roman Catholic Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Wielopole Skrzyńskie (photo by Katrin Stoll, July 1, 2020)



View of part of the Roman Catholic Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Wielopole Skrzyńskie (photo by Katrin Stoll, July 1, 2020)



The Tadeusz Kantor Museum in Wielopole Skrzyńskie, across from the Roman Catholic Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (photo by Katrin Stoll, July 1, 2020)



Plaque on the building of the Tadeusz Kantor Museum. It says “*Nigdy tu już nie powrócę*” (I’ll never come back here again). This quote comes from Tadeusz Kantor’s play *Dybuk* (photo by Katrin Stoll, July 1, 2020)



Statue of the Mother of God in front of the Roman Catholic Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Wieolopole Skrzyńskie. The statue is located next to the building where Tadeusz Kantor was born on April 6, 1915 and which today houses the Tadeusz Kantor Museum (photo by Katrin Stoll, July 1, 2020)

What else happened at the police station? In preparation for the shooting of Maria and Ariel Blumental, someone must have dug two pits in the Jewish cemetery, because Nachman Blumental, walking around the cemetery in the summer of 1948 and looking at the grave of his family, notes: “the grave had already been prepared below”.

In summation, starting in the morning, the participating observers and the Polish policemen waited for the German, whom they had previously – and personally – called themselves. Before notifying the German authorities, they had choices. The Blue Policemen could have: a) not reacted to the denunciation at all; b) reacted, but then – after the inspection – let Maria and Ariel go free, which would also have been safe for investigators since Maria had documents (“Aryan papers”). Arrest, imprisonment and the formation of tight security around Maria and Ariel limited the policemen’s room for maneuver, but they still had choices. On the other hand, summoning the Germans meant an unequivocal decision. For the Polish perpetrators, the situation offered no alternative from the very beginning. For the Jewish victims, it only becomes so at this point. Poles took on the role of “second instance” (Janicka, 2018c, pp. 43–44), perceiving the situation as if an alternative did not exist: “A scenario with no alternative [...] produces reality with no alternative” (Janicka, 2018c, p. 44). In the imagination of non-Jewish

residents, Maria and Ariel were *a priori* sentenced⁶⁷ to death. In actual fact, it was the inhabitants who sentenced them to death – because of the antisemitic violence and the socio-cultural legitimacy of antisemitism. They imagined and presented themselves as if they had nothing to do with the death of a woman and a child. Like “keepers of fate”. Bożena Keff uses this term as a metaphorical description of Poles’ involvement in the Holocaust. Interpreting Zofia Nałkowska’s short story “Przy torze kolejowym” (By the Railroad Tracks), Keff explains the term “fate” as follows:

The real action of the story in “Przy torze kolejowym” begins when fate has already begun to move – *someone has already informed the police* [emphasis in original – K.S.] about the presence of a Jewish woman, so the functionaries notify the Germans. What is this fate? This (willing) perception of every Jew and Jewess as irretrievably doomed, for whom – after all – nothing can be done, all the more because if you want to do something, denunciation is almost certain. Fate happens in the image of people standing near the Jewish woman, above their heads. They supposedly have nothing to do with it. And yet one of them started it and from that moment fate starts, until someone else kills the woman (allegedly for her sake). (Keff, 2020, p. 7)

In her short story, which is read in schools in Poland, Zofia Nałkowska describes an emblematic situation which, in recent years, has been analyzed by authors of Polish cultural criticism (Calderón Puerta, 2010; Keff, 2020). In the case of Maria Blumental and Ariel Blumental, as in Nałkowska’s “Przy torze kolejowym”, the representation of the crime by participating observers is part of the crime.

Under Arrest: The Torture and “Undressing”⁶⁸ to Death of Maria Blumental

The Blue Policemen took Maria to the jail, where she was held all night. Her detention took place in a building other than the police station. In Blumental we read: “Others say she sat in the jail (in a single-story house; nonexistent today). She was given bread through a barred window and a bottle of water was tied to a stick. They felt sorry for her [Żal im było jej]”. “She was given”. The passive voice. It is unclear who gave her the bread and the bottle of water, but we can assume we are talking about the participating observers. They are very close by. The sentence “a bottle of water was tied to a stick” indicates an attempt to distance oneself from this closeness in the presence of Blumental.

The PWN Polish dictionary gives three meanings for the word “żal”: 1. “*uczucie smutku*” (a feeling of sadness); 2. “*skrucha po popełnieniu czegoś złego*” (repentance after committing something wrong); 3. “*pretensja do kogoś lub czegoś spowodowana rozczarowaniem*”

67 Analyzing “the argumentation scheme used by the murderer of Regina Fisz and her child”, Elżbieta Janicka shows that “the source of the crime is the image of Jews as the condemned” (Janicka, 2018c, p. 44).

68 “Undressing of Jews to death” is a formulation put forward by Elżbieta Janicka. She introduces it in the context of theft carried out against Jewish refugees from ghettos and transports and of the “Polish business of help”: “After all, the condition for using the Polish business of help was having above-average material resources. There was a double price list for goods and services. The process that was taking place at that time can be described as the undressing of Jews to death” (Janicka, 2018b, pp. 136–137).

(a grudge held against someone or something because of disappointment).⁶⁹ Sadness is a reaction to the loss of someone or something. Maria is perceived as an object that is already lost. She is alive, but is perceived as already dead, as in the case of one of the victims of the Kielce pogrom, Regina Fisz, who was murdered by the policeman Stefan Mazur, and who “is moved from the category of the still alive to the category of the dead” (Janicka, 2018c, p. 44).⁷⁰

Regarding the name of Maria and the presence of the child, the Christian observer may also associate the scene in jail with Christ in the darkness, in a context deformed by unredeemed reality. In fact, however, gestures of regret and the very act of serving food and drink are an expression of aggression on the basis of adding insult to injury: they highlight the fact that Maria is trapped in a situation with no way out, and so this negation of her own agency practically reaches the level of cynicism.

Just like at the police station, the neighbors again made contact with Maria. They talked to her. Some of them had business in mind. We know from other sources that Jews – in a situation with no way out – had to pay Germans or participating observers for a bottle of water in the form of money⁷¹ or jewelry.⁷² In the Christian antisemitic imaginarium, “Jew” is money and money is “Jew”. As Bożena Keff writes:

The Christian phantasm in which Jews and money form an inseparable pair, the phantasm of Jewish gold, spins like a revolving stage and shows the followers of the myth in action. During the Holocaust, Jews were deprived of everything of value, although it was known then that every thing they owned was located not in the context of “property”, but in the context of life and death. Taking things and money was taking life. (Keff, 2020, p. 45)

69 In the Christian religion, regret for sins means “repentance after committing a sin as a condition of forgiveness”. In the Catholic catechism, repentance and a firm resolve to improve are two conditions for the remission of sins.

70 Janicka writes: “Stefan Mazur justified the crime against the child as follows: ‘The mother was dead anyway, so the child would be crying’. The mother was dead – already. The child was alive – still. Here, the death of both is something presupposed, if not given, or more precisely: inflicted. Their life – reduced to the liminal phase – is synonymous with an interpellation” (Janicka, 2018c, pp. 44–45).

71 There are numerous descriptions of this phenomenon. From the Jewish perspective, the doctor Aron Bejlin, whom the Germans transported from Białystok to Auschwitz in February 1943, testified that he paid for a bucket of water at the station with his wristwatch. The German demanded that the bucket be returned. Testimony of the witness Dr. Aron Bejlin before the District Court in Bielefeld (criminal proceedings against Dr. Altenloh et al., 5 Ks 1/65), 25.5.1966, Landesarchiv/Staatsarchiv Detmold, D 21 A, nr 6341, audio tape 18. Analysis of the interrogation of the witness Dr. Aron Bejlin. See Stoll, 2012, p. 554.

72 On April 8, 1948, Zygmunt Klukowski wrote in his diary about the fact that “every day one train comes to Bełżec from Lublin and one from Lwów, 20 or so wagons each,” and that the deported Jews were aware that transport to Bełżec meant death: “On the way people – mainly railwaymen – see terrible scenes because the Jews already know very well where and why they are taking them, and at the same time they do not give them anything to eat or drink. At the station in Szczepleszyn, the railwaymen saw and heard with their own eyes and ears how a Jew gave 150 zlotys for a kilo of bread through a wagon window, and a Jewish woman took a gold ring off her finger in exchange for a glass of water for a dying child” (Klukowski, 1959, p. 254). Jews perished on their way to Nazi camps due to the cruel conditions created by the Germans – cramped conditions, fear of death, lack of food and drink. The behavior of participating observers towards Jews trapped in deportation trains meant that those Jews who had no money had no way to ease their loved ones’ suffering. In Lanzmann’s film *Shoah*, the locals in Treblinka and Chełmno recall how they gave water to people trapped in carriages but ignore the topic of the money and jewelry used to pay for the water.

Confirmation of the fact that “taking things and money was taking life” was provided by Cael Perechodnik, who writes ironically:

If all things had been taken from me, I would not be in this world anymore. Although there is a small difference: with the things that the Poles did not take from me, I can live a year at most, with the things that were taken from me, I could live a hundred years; but that's a small difference in the end, it's really about only two stupid zeros. (Perechodnik, 2018, p. 146)

Within the framework of “choiceless choices” (Langer, 1982, p. 72), Jews sometimes gave Poles things for safekeeping (Klukowski, 1959, p. 255). The town jail was the place where captured Jews were interrogated in order to obtain information about people with whom Jews had left their belongings, and where those belongings were located. As Jan Grabowski showed, using the example of the Dąbrowa Tarnowska district, the “point was to quickly extract information about the fabled Jewish gold. According to the deep conviction of peasants in the Tarnów area, Jews had gold. All Jews” (Grabowski, 2013, p. 109). The reaction to the phantasm of “Jewish gold” was to look for that gold. In his review of Jan Grabowski's book on “a certain county”, Jerzy Jedlicki writes:

“Jewish gold”. If a Jew is not wearing it, it means that he has buried it. None of the antisemitic myths proved to be as terrible as this one in the encouragement of crime. Even if there was usually no gold. Sometimes a roll of survival dollars sewn into the collar. And one had to share with the policeman, always greedy, [and] with the blackmailing neighbor. So a dress was also useful, even long johns torn from a corpse were not to be sniffed at. (Jedlicki, 2011, p. 48)

We can assume that in the towns around Dębica, people also talked about, and searched for, “Jewish gold”. As far as the case of Wielopole is concerned, we know from postwar investigations that during the Holocaust, the Blue Policeman Kapelusz “received”, or rather robbed, money from a certain Jape Wikser, who lived in Wielopole and was persecuted as a “Jew”.⁷³ Since Blumental's notes are silent about money and material items, we can assume that participating observers were silent on the subject in front of him.

If “others” told Blumental that Maria sat in jail, that means the townspeople watched her being taken to jail. Another act of the gruesome play begins at this point – that is, the further humiliation of Maria. One of the townspeople told Blumental: “she [Maria] was very pretty”. From other sources and testimonies about the Holocaust, we know what the perpetrators and accomplices did with Jewish women whom they categorized as “pretty”: they used sexual violence. In the case of Jews from Gniewczyna, for example, “several bosses of the mafia enterprise made decisions about torture and rape – about who, when and to whom, and about when these families with children should be handed over to the Nazis to death [...]” (Markiel, 2011, p. 79). The locals raped Jewish wom-

73 IPN, Rz 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego, Tarnów, 8 kwietnia 1947 r., Radzik Ludwik oficer śledczy Pow. Urzędu Bezp. Publ. w Tarnowie przesłuchał w charakterze podejrzanego: Kapelusz Józef [Radzik Ludwik investigating officer District Office of Public Security in Tarnów questioned as a suspect: Józef Kapelusz], pp. 0049–0050, here p. 0049. Jan T. Gross points out that murder and plunder were closely related. He emphasizes that both those in uniform and civilians took part in the exploitation of Jews: “Uniformed representatives of the local population in occupied Poland, the so-called dark blue police, were made up for the most part from prewar employees of the State Police (Policja Państwowa)” (Gross, 2012, p. 68).

en in the Trinczer's house – individually and collectively – in the very center of the town of Gniewczyna Tryniecka, “in the vicinity of the presbytery, the vicar's house, the organist's house and the church, near the school, not somewhere on the outskirts away from the main road” (Markiel, 2011, p. 80). Leib Trinczer's house was utilized by the perpetrators – a group of “locals with the commander of the district fire brigade and firefighters” – for three days as a jail. Then the perpetrators notified the Blue Police station (see Leociak, 2018, p. 99). Characteristically, they included the Trinczer's neighbors. From Tadeusz Markiel's account, it can be concluded that the violence he describes was an integral part of the process of the persecution and murder of Jews. As Jan Gross writes, “[t]orture, it seems was ubiquitous in peasant-Jewish encounters. One reads about the brutalization of Jews, including the rape of women, in numerous depositions” (Gross, 2012, p. 62). Joanna Tokarska-Bakir points out that “intimate violence” is “the last and most difficult layer of Holocaust testimonials to discover” (Tokarska-Bakir, 2019a, p. 163).

We need to read between the lines of Nachman Blumental's account of the crime committed in Wielopole. *Expressis verbis*, the rape theme appears in the postwar interrogation of a witness who was present at the time. We can therefore guess that the Blue Policemen and participating observers took advantage of the fact that they had access to Maria Blumental's body all night and – according to the perception of the “Jew” as a source of income – they squeezed everything out of her: both physically and materially.

Where was the child that night before the shooting? The neighbors told Blumental that Maria sat in the jail. They did not say whether or not she was there with her child. Did Ariel have to spend the night before death without his mother? Alone?

After the paragraph containing Blumental's sentence that “others say she [Maria] sat in the jail”, there is a separate paragraph, in which we read: “It is possible that it is a different woman Bergerowa [?] (a dentist from Dębica, who was shot in Wielopole with her eight-year-old son) [...] Someone from the crowd claims that the child shouted *daddy* in the jail”. In other words, maybe it is not about Maria Blumental, but another Jewish woman. It is possible that Blue Police officers tortured both Bergerowa and Maria Blumental in the jail. Given that the crime was routinized in the sense that certain practices of violence during the persecution and murder of Polish Jews were repeated according to common patterns, the last-mentioned possibility, although it cannot be proven, must also be considered.

On the Way to Execution at the Jewish Cemetery

The crime was visible. The execution of Maria Blumental and Ariel Blumental took place the next day, in broad daylight, just as their arrest and removal to the police station took place in broad daylight. After a night of torture in jail, Blue Policemen led Maria and Ariel to the Jewish cemetery on a hill east of the center of Wielopole. You can see the Catholic Church from the cemetery.



View of the center of Wielopole from the Jewish cemetery. The Jewish cemetery is in the foreground frame. On the horizon, on the left-hand side, the tower of the Roman Catholic Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (photo by Katrin Stoll, July 1, 2020)



The Jewish cemetery in Wielopole Skrzyńskie. On the horizon, the tower of the Roman Catholic Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (photo by Katrin Stoll, July 1, 2020)

Ziamba told Blumental that the townspeople watched as “the wife and child were led from the police station through the town [Wielopole] along the river”. Ziamba claimed that he was not the town’s mayor at the time.⁷⁴ He didn’t mention the night in the jail. Perhaps because he himself took part in undressing Maria until her death. Maybe for this reason he told Blumental that Maria and Ariel had been led out of the police station to the cemetery.

The road from the center of Wielopole to the Jewish cemetery is approximately 650 meters long. The Wielopolka River – today more a stream than a small river – ran parallel to the market square and the synagogue; today a fire station stands in place of the latter. (On the building, there is no plaque with information about what happened to the synagogue.)



The building in Wielopole Skrzyńskie housing the Volunteer Fire Department in Wielopole Skrzyńskie (photo by Katrin Stoll, July 2, 2020)

“Through the town” indicates that Maria and the child were led through the market square and that residents were watching the scene, either from a window of the so-called *pożydowskie* (formerly Jewish) houses on the market square, or standing in front of buildings. Today, on the edge of the market square⁷⁵ in Wielopole, there is a monument to Tadeusz Kantor along with his sister Zosia.

74 This statement was true. The town mayor was Józef Długosz. I was informed about this by Wielopole residents during field research in July 2020.

75 During field research at the beginning of July 2020, I learned from Wielopole residents that during (or after?) the German occupation, the surface of the square was made from matzevot.



Tadeusz Kantor with his sister Zosia on the market square in Wielopole Skrzyńskie. The inscription on the plaque reads: "TADEUSZ KANTOR with his sister Zosia. Image of the artist from his childhood spent in Wielopole Skrzyńskie" (photo by Katrin Stoll, July 1, 2020)

Participating observers perceived the event through the phantasmatic framework of Christian martyrdom and Christ's Way of Suffering. Jesus, carrying the cross, falls down three times. Christians view suffering as something of great value. In Blumental we read: "She carried the child in her arms. She stopped along the way three times. She was resting. She said something to the German gendarmes". This is how the scene was remembered by the "old woman" who "saw how they were led along". According to her, "they were calm". Blumental: "My wife claimed to be a Pole. She asked for a priest. He was not allowed". She claimed to be Catholic. She was denied self-determination and a chance of survival for her son. The phrase "He was not allowed" in connection with the priest gives food for thought. Does this mean that the priest was at the scene of the crime but was not allowed to approach the victim? The passive voice. We do not know who did not allow him access to Maria.

The involvement of participating observers is revealed when they portray themselves as helpless, as people who showed compassion and offered "assistance" to victims. Ziembra told Blumental, "I don't want to say, Lord, what kind of woman it was. The whole village was crying as they led her to death. I can't tell you about it... You have a stone, not a heart, if you want to know about it...". In this way, Ziembra blocks Blumental's



Furniture store in Wielopole Skrzyńskie (photo by Katrin Stoll, July 1, 2020)

way in the attempt to determine the course of events. According to Ziemba's interpretation, it is Blumental, who lost his wife and child in circumstances about which Ziemba may know, who is a man without pity. Instead of telling Blumental more about what he saw himself, Ziemba lists the names of those who know "how they took her" but who "are not around at the moment" because "they've left". Ziemba's refusal is an act of violence against Nachman Blumental: he denies Blumental empathy for the suffering of his own family and denies him the right to feel the inner state of his loved ones. Blumental's despair and his need to obtain information and learn the truth are not sufficient reasons for the town's mayor to tell him what he saw. The fact that Ziemba withheld the truth from Blumental, the fact that he treats the crime as a shameful secret that requires discretion, indicates that he is feeling *jouissance*. It seems that the source of the declared shock and actual aggression is not the event itself – the antisemitic violence of the participating observers and the suffering of the mother and child on their way to death – but the confrontation with his own role evoked by Blumental's presence. Blumental's questions are an unpleasant reminder of the fact that Maria and Ariel Blumental were helpless, unlike the participating observers, who portray themselves as showing mercy to the victims.

"The whole village was crying" as they watched the mother with the child in her arms, preventing them from escaping by their mere presence. The tears of those gath-

ered in anticipation of death of Jews treats the living as if they are already dead. Feeding the child, Maria Blumental opposed these gestures that obfuscate the active participation of neighbors in the crime. They watched as Maria “gave the Child a piece of bread and said, ‘Eat, child, this much of yours’”. These are the final words of Ziemba, who “can do no more”. Like everyone else, he accepted Maria’s imminent death along with that of her child, which many Catholics may associate with the image of the Virgin Mary with the baby in her arms. Maria Blumental was the only one who did not fully accept death.

Execution: The climax of the Performance

Windisch, the master of death, took on the role expected of him. He carried out the execution. Blumental: “Others say that my Wife was shot 6–7 times because his hand was trembling. After the first shot, the child jumped up; died on the second”. The German declined to say “no”. Nonetheless, he shifted responsibility to the Blue Policemen and participating observers – at least according to the “old woman”.

“They were drinking vodka, but they didn’t want to shoot. Windisch’s hand was shaking. He fired a couple of times; first at the Wife then the Child”. Maybe the Blue Policemen were also shooting? Because Windisch was a bad shot? He further noted: “Even the German did not want to do this”. A carpenter who “remembers nothing” also stated that “no one wanted to shoot the wife and child”. Nobody wanted to, but everyone did.

There was an antisemitic and racist consensus among the Blue Policemen and the German police officer. They drank alcohol (vodka) together. We know from many accounts that alcohol was an important and constant element of the mass murder, especially from *La Shoah par balles* (Patrick Desbois). Alcohol was present before, during and after executions. In his work on this subject, researcher Edward B. Westermann raised the question “whether the primary role of alcohol was to provide an incentive to murder or to desensitize the murderers to their actions” (Westermann, 2016, p. 7). Some perpetrators needed to consume alcohol before they shot Jewish children:

The execution of children appears to have been a threshold that some perpetrators could cross only with the assistance of alcohol. At the site of the mass execution in August 1941 at Kamenets-Podolski, for instance, individual shooters who experienced reservations about shooting children were periodically excused to take a break and drink schnapps before returning to the firing line. (Westermann, 2016, p. 7)

Perhaps in Wielopole, Windisch shot several times because he was drunk. After the murder of Maria Blumental and the distribution of her clothes, which had been violently ripped off before her death, they all left the place of execution together.

Blumental’s records testify to how close the participating observers were to the site of execution at the Jewish cemetery in Wielopole. Blumental’s next sentence starts a separate paragraph: “Another person says that, when the shot struck [my] Wife, they heard her scream ‘Mother of God’”. If the participating observers heard this or some-

thing else – the cry of “Mother of God” testifies to their perspective and their interpretation of the event through the prism of Christian martyrdom, which would mean that they were very close to the execution. Likewise, if they saw the murderer’s hand tremble. The bricklayer Franciszek Łuszczak, who “lives next to the cemetery and saw everything”, shows Blumental “around the cemetery and indicates the place where his Wife was shot”. Łuszczak mentions neither the perpetrator nor the accomplices. Blumental describes the location and place of the execution:

The cemetery is located on a hill covered with [overgrown?] bushes, clearly visible from the town located on the hill, separated by a stream. No traces of the old graves are visible. There are freshly dug up places. My Wife was fired at; then the Child; the grave had already been prepared below. – My Wife told the child “calm down”.

The fact that Łuszczak heard Maria Blumental soothe her child in a quiet voice just before her death proves that he was standing as close to the crime as possible. The intimacy of the murder was not limited to the physical relationship of the murderers and the murdered. Participating observers were an integral part of this intimate murder. Łuszczak does not say who dug the pits. Blumental does not ask him who else was present at the Jewish cemetery during the murder.

For Blumental, the most important thing is Maria and Ariel’s experience in the face of death. He writes with deep empathy about his wife and son’s pain and suffering, always using a capital letter. In one separate paragraph we read:

They killed my Wife with one shot. She asked to be shot first. She did not want to watch her Son die. She did not want to undress. The Child started screaming: ‘Mom, mom, where is m[**changed to M**⁷⁶]ommy’. He shot. At the Child, once injured, the second time killed. The Child screamed. – They buried my Wife without clothes. The Child clothed.

Maria Blumental fought for her life until the very end, knowing that there was no way to defend herself against the attackers, that she was powerless in the face of the attack by the perpetrator and his accomplices. She put up resistance. She made a gesture directed against the perpetrators’ logic. She did not accept the death sentence. “She did not want to undress. Her clothes were torn off. She asked to be shot before her Son”.⁷⁷ The clothes “were torn off”. The passive voice. Perhaps Maria Blumental’s last request was an attempt to save the child. Perhaps she hoped that her son – a helpless child, an orphan – would be spared despite everything. From the view of the participating observers, the child was the phantasmatic “Jew”. The phantasm is real because it is realized. It is made legally valid, thus blocking any other course of action. Nobody was able to imagine any alternative other than the death of the child. The socio-cultural con-

76 Commentary by Elżbieta Janicka.

77 This sentence appears in a paragraph that begins with: “Town residents. The old woman and the tailors of the establishment”. It is unclear whether it is “the old woman” or the “tailors of the establishment” who are saying this.

struct “Jew” as the monstrous embodiment of Evil was legitimate in the eyes of the participating observers. External reality was adjusted to the internal reality of antisemites.

It was a murder preceded by the theft of Maria Blumental’s clothes. “One of the Polish policemen”, writes Blumental, “was given my Wife’s coat”. However, it should be remembered that according to the will of the perpetrators of the Holocaust, the Jews “always had to perish naked” (Niziołek, 2019, p. 64). As Stanisław Lem’s Horst Aspernicus explains, “it was not only about the benefit of the crime committed, but also the satisfaction that comes with carrying it out” (Lem, 1980, p. 281).

For Nachman Blumental, fear, despair, loneliness and his wife’s struggle for both her and her son’s lives are what mattered most to him. Recreating and imagining the fate of his loved ones is the only way for him to express solidarity with them, to experience a connection with them. It is his wife who is at the center of his attention, not the perpetrator.

Contextualization of the Crime

The murder of Maria Blumental and Ariel Blumental was not an isolated case during the Holocaust in Wielopole and its vicinity. It was a typical case. In Blumental’s records there is a reference to another Jewish woman (Bergerowa) who was shot along with her child in Wielopole. In addition, Blumental notes at the beginning of the third part of his records that “Łuszczak talks about the fact of the shooting of a Jew along with his family”.

On June 30, 1942, a group of Jewish men and women was shot in the Jewish cemetery in Wielopole. These killings formed part of “Operation Reinhardt”. According to Tomasz Frydel, author of the article on Dębica County in *Dalej jest noc*:

The ghetto in Wielopole Skrzyńskie was liquidated on June 26 [1942], and its population of 925 Jews was relocated to the ghetto in nearby Ropczyce, while 50–56 elderly people were shot and buried in the local Jewish cemetery. (Frydel, 2018, p. 409)

The passive voice. Frydel does not name the perpetrators. Perhaps due to a lack of sources.

As can be seen in the photo from July 2020, almost all the matzevot were stolen from the cemetery in Wielopole. There is no information on the theft of gravestones from the cemetery in Wielopole on the Virtual Shtetl website of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews (*Cmentarz żydowski w Wielopolu*, n.d.). During field research at the beginning of July 2020, I learned from Wielopole residents that during (or after?) the German occupation, the surface of the market square was paved with matzevot. While mowing the grass growing in part of the cemetery, Mr. Czaja revealed one matzevah in the presence of myself and Jos Stübner.



Mr. Czaja at the Jewish cemetery in Wielopole Skrzyńskie (photo by Katrin Stoll, July 1, 2020)



Destroyed matzevah at the Jewish cemetery in Wielopole Skrzyńskie (photo by Katrin Stoll, July 1, 2020).
Next to this matzevah lies a grinding wheel made from a matzevah.



Grinding wheel from David Meier's matzeva, Jewish cemetery in Wielopole Skrzyńskie (photo by Wojciech Wilczyk, October 6, 2020, courtesy of the same. © Wojciech Wilczyk)



This photograph shows the Jewish cemetery in Wielopole. Matzevot not stolen and not used as "everyday objects" (Baksik, 2012) can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The forest covers part of the area belonging to the cemetery (photo by Jos Stübner, July 1, 2020, courtesy of the same. © Jos Stübner)



Monument in the Jewish cemetery in Wielopole Skrzyńskie (photo by Katrin Stoll, July 1, 2020)



Monument in the Jewish cemetery in Wielopole Skrzyńskie (photo by Wojciech Wilczyk, October 6, 2020, courtesy of the same. © Wojciech Wilczyk)

As the work of Łukasz Baksik shows, the grinding wheel is one of the many objects for which matzevot has been used in Poland. Matzevot not stolen from the Jewish cemetery in Wielopole and not used as “everyday objects” (Baksik, 2012) can be counted with the fingers of one hand. Part of the area belonging to the Jewish cemetery is now covered by trees.

There are two plaques on the monument at the site of the Jewish cemetery in Wielopole. It seems that the older English-language plaque “Never again, never forgotten” commemorating specific people – i.e. victims shot on June 30, 1942 “just because of being Jewish” – was attached to the monument by those who established it, while the new plaque next to it is an addition put up by the townspeople: “The village head and the community of the Wielopole Skrzyńskie commune”. The first plaque is not dated. The second is dated: January 24, 2017. The inscription on the second plaque reads: “To commemorate the Jews of Wielopole Skrzyńskie, their life, martyrdom and the Holocaust during the Nazi occupation”. The following names of the people murdered on June 30 are engraved on the original plaque: Sarah Adest; Isack Baum; Toby Bart; Salomon Barth; Chanina Barth; Shaul Beteil; Mr. and Mrs. Berglass; Lea Firer; Friedrich Rosa; Mr. (Chaskel) and Mrs. Fooks; Mr. (Hilesh) and Mrs. Gold; Amalia Hiller, Asher Hiller, Mr. (Reisel) Mrs. Har Jakow; Mr. (Salomon) and Mrs. Knissbaum, Mr. and Mrs. Klaksbald; K. Chaskel; Mrs. Kleinkremer; Jakob Kleinkremer; Lea Kresh; Elka Mandel; Meier Meller; Frieda Meler; Gitale Nofshe; Leah Ohrenstein; Eidel Redel; Mr. (Moses) and Mrs. Silber; Dvora Samuels; Leah Schlesinger; Reisel Sartoria; Mr. (Hershel) and Mrs. (Nechama) Samuels; Mr. (Lezer) and Mrs. Siegel; Leah Strick; Markus Segal; Mr. (Ozer) and Mrs. (Leah) Teitelbaum; Jacob Wind; Mrs. Walker; Sarah Weingarten; Aharon Zeiger.

The painter Roman Lipa from Wielopole made a visual representation of this event. As for the depiction of the perpetrators, you can see a German shooting a woman in the back of the head and a Blue Policeman looking away. In this representation the victims are fully clothed. The participating observers are not in Lipa’s painting, as if the execution occurred in a social vacuum.

Tomasz Frydel identified “952 cases [of] murdered [people] after the liquidation of ghettos” in Dębica County. According to his research, “in total, 268 Jews were saved in Dębica County: 141 (53%) in the town and 90 (34%) in bunkers in the forest”. With regard to “33 (12%) [people], the lack of details prevented” him from “recreating the specificity of the strategies used” (Frydel, 2018, p. 420). Analyzing the variety of “strategies used in the town”, Frydel writes:

A more or less “bad” appearance influenced whether a given Jew could live “on the surface” or whether he had to be hidden in order to be invisible to other town residents. If the person seeking rescue had enough of an “Aryan” appearance to be considered a Polish man/woman, a story was usually invented about a relative from a distant city, the widow of a Polish officer who had fallen in the war, or something like that. In turn, “Semitic” features forced people to stay at home during the day and go out only after dark. (Frydel, 2018, p. 421)

Here the scholar uncritically reproduces the perception of Jews through the watchful eyes of those around him. It was not the appearance of the Jews that forced them to stay at home during the day, but the perception of that appearance according to the racist categorization on the part of the non-Jewish majority. Referring to Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* and his concept of panoptic prison architecture in which "visibility is a trap" (Foucault, 1977, p. 200), Elżbieta Janicka describes reality in Poland during the German occupation as "a panoptic reality" (Janicka, 2018b, p. 142):

Panoptic reality is a socio-cultural apparatus that enables the act of permanent vision and immediate identification, and guarantees that the smallest and most peripheral element will not be omitted. Hence a camera that reaches everywhere and reaches everything. [...] In the Polish version – from the perspective of the Holocaust victims – this structure was founded on the omnipresent and all-seeing Christian observer, constituting a dispersed gaze with many faces, "that transformed the whole social body into a field of perception: thousands of eyes posted everywhere, mobile attentions ever on the alert". (Janicka, 2018b, pp. 141–142)

IV. A Gesture in the Spirit of Walter Benjamin. Confrontation with Pressure from the Majority

Speaking from a position of exclusion means confronting pressure and censorship. The game, played by their Polish neighbors, part of which involves blocking Jewish voices about what they experienced during the Holocaust as well as after the war, is usually a game of traditional Polish identity. (Żukowski, 2021, p. 11)

What conclusion did Blumental formulate as a result of his encounter with Polish participating observers? What did he do to preserve the memory of his wife and son and to defend that memory? The matter is worth considering because Jewish memory of the Holocaust was deformed and de-Judaized owing to the national imperative, especially after 1948. "Gradually, Jewish memory decreased, that memory was supposed to be shared. The last monument to the Holocaust and the struggle of Jews was erected in 1948 in the Warsaw ghetto" (Jarecka, 2014, p. 112).

Nachman Blumental asked for permission to exhume the bodies of his wife and son. On August 21, 1948, the district office in Dębica issued a permit for the exhumation and transportation of the bodies. Blumental assisted in the exhumation, and then accompanied the bodies on the way from Wielopole to Warsaw, where they were re-interred in the Jewish cemetery at Okopowa Street.

STAROSTWO POWIATOWE
w Dębicy

L.S.22/27/48.

Wolne od opłaty stemplowej

Dębica dnia 21 sierpnia 1948 r.

POZWOLENIE
na przewóz i exhumację zwłok.-

Na mocy rozporządzenia Ministra Opieki Społecznej z dnia 30.XI.1933 r. Dz.U.R.P.Nr.13 poz.113 z 1934 r. zezwala się Ob.Blumentalowi Nachmanowi z Warszawy, na przewóz i exhumację zwłok Bł.p. Marii z Tewlów Blumental zamordowanego przez Niemców w roku 1943 w miejscowości Wielopole Skrzyń. i tam pochowanego. Zwłoki będą umieszczone w szczelnej trumnie z twardego drzewa zrobionej i następnie włożone w drugiej trumnie (w rodzaju skrzyni zrobionej) i przewiezione drogą kołową (tj. koleją lub samochodem) z miejsca wyżej wspomnianego na cmentarz do Warszawy, gdzie bez naruszenia pieczęci należy je pochować. Zwłokom będzie towarzyszyć Ob. Blumental Nachman Dyrektor Żydowskiego Inst.Historycz. któremu za okazaniem niniejszego zezwolenia zechcą właściwe Władze użyć potrzebnej pomocy, urzędowej. Zezwolenie to ważne jest do dnia 28 sierpnia 1948 r. tj. na okres 7-miu dni od daty wystawienia.

Dopisano atramentem Ariela
Blumentala

m.p.
Starosta
Powiatowy
Dębicki

Starosta Powiatowy: -

(-)

Chłędowski

Stwierdzam, że zwłoki zostały opakowane zgodnie z niniejszym zezwoleniem

STAROSTWO POWIATOWE
w Dębicy

L.S.22/27/48

m.p.
P. K. P.
Dębica 1
23.VIII.1948

Lekarz Powiatowy:

Powiatowy Kontroler
Sanitarny

(-)

Sobaszek Karol

Uwaga: Zezwolenie to należy zwrócić tutaj, Starostwu po odebraniu i pochowaniu zwłok.-

Za zgodność z oryginałem

Permission from the County Administration in Dębica for the exhumation and subsequent transportation of the bodies of Maria Blumental and Ariel Blumental dated August 21, 1948. (Nachman Blumental Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, courtesy of Miron Blumental and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. © Miron Blumental)

Wielopole residents tried to convince Blumental not to move his family's bodies. For this purpose they used philosemitic violence (Janicka & Żukowski, 2016). They posthumously accepted Maria into the community from which they excluded her during her lifetime. In the Blumental report we read:

Fela interprets people's sympathy alongside the fact that they considered her [Maria] Polish, and therefore I should not put anything in Jewish [sic!] on the tombstone. Everyone from Wielopole, together with Fela, were of the opinion that I should not exhume [her body], but leave [it] in Wielopole. "She died here, they know her here, she should stay here" – said a certain **x**⁷⁸ **[from?] X [Krakow?]**⁷⁹ (Polish woman). She perished because of the Child. My Wife claimed that the Grandmother, with whom the Child was brought up, had ordered that the Child be circumcised, without Her knowledge.

Fela was probably Felicja Bawół, wife of Maurycy Tewel and sister-in-law of Maria Blumental. As the quote shows, we are dealing here with the perception of reality through the framework of antisemitism and philosemitism simultaneously. From an antisemitic perspective, blame lies with the Jews ("She perished because of the Child"): according to antisemitic logic, the Jews themselves are to blame. Philosemitic violence, in turn, is a tool to conceal the socio-cultural source of the crime: it enables those who considered Maria Polish to obfuscate their own role in the production of the phantasmic "Jew" after her death.

The grandmother who "had ordered that the Child be circumcised" is probably Nachman Blumental's mother in Borszczów. From there, Maria Blumental and Ariel Blumental fled to Dębica. About Felicja's mother, Bawołowa, we read:

Bawołowa says that Maria could not sit around in the attic hiding place, because she claimed that the Child must have air, exercise, etc., and that in the countryside she would be able to walk **[the end of the expression is obscured by fold]**.⁸⁰ After she [Maria Blumental – K.S.] left the Child – she came back after a few days and took it. She [Bawołowa – K.S.] bathed it every day. The child was already attached to her. He climbed into her lap, and when anyone entered, he would make his escape and hide behind the wardrobe. – Once he cried that daddy is not there, mommy is not there, and grandma beats me. Then she cried and said that daddy was there, mommy was there, that they would come, that bad people had come; to keep him calm. Fela claims that she advised Maria to dress Ariel as a girl.

This excerpt indicates that Maria Blumental was hiding with Bawołowa for some time, probably in Dębica. For her and the child, the conditions there were unbearable. In Bawołowa's story, however, it was not the conditions of violence that caused Maria to leave her hiding place in order to seek help in the countryside, but her attitude and personality. Felicja Tewel and her mother depict Blumental's wife, in his presence, as a reckless woman who preferred freedom of movement in the countryside to being locked up "in the attic hiding place". In the eyes of the sister-in-law and mother-in-law, blame lies with Maria. The act of aggression towards her is manifested in the following

78 The "x" is Elżbieta Janicka's indication for a missing word.

79 Commentary by Elżbieta Janicka.

80 Commentary by Elżbieta Janicka.

logic: If she had not left her hiding place in the attic and had followed Felicja's advice ("Fela claims that she advised Maria to dress Ariel as a girl"), she would have survived. In other words, in this version of reality, Maria and her child were responsible for a situation in which, in actual fact, she was helpless and could not possibly survive because of the attitude and behavior which dominated in the environment. The act of shifting blame onto the victims takes place in Nachman Blumental's presence.

How did Blumental react to what he heard? He noted:

At/from **[word obscured by fold]**⁸¹ the beginning, I really thought that they should be left in Wielopole. They would not insult the grave here (as in Dębica). **[word obscured by fold]**⁸² would be cared for. There is a legend about them. Will be under consideration. Later, however, I had a different **[word obscured by fold]**⁸³ thought. It is difficult to get to Wielopole. It is far from our own place. It is possible for relatives to take away others buried here, and they will stay themselves. I wanted to arrange a more elaborate funeral for them. I wanted more people to be here. So that the monument was elaborate, etc. But I would also like to leave some kind of sign in Wielopole – a stone with an appropriate inscription, so that **[?]** **[word obscured by fold]**⁸⁴ the local population has something as the object of their attention, around which a legend circulates. Leaving my wife in Wielopole would mean agreeing that She was not Jewish.

Nachman Blumental challenged the typical antisemitic and philosemitic perceptions of the dominant majority. He did so in the spirit of Walter Benjamin, "that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he is victorious. And this enemy has never ceased to be victorious" (Benjamin, 2003, p. 391).

Maria Blumental and Ariel Blumental's funeral took place on September 2, 1948 in the Jewish cemetery at Okopowa Street in Warsaw. The matzevah is engraved with the words "*zamordowani przez Niemców*" (murdered by the Germans). In the obituary by the Central Committee of Jews in Poland we read that Maria and Ariel Blumental were "*zamordowani przez zbirów niemieckich*" (murdered by German thugs).⁸⁵

There is no information to the effect that Blue Policemen and participating observers took part in these events. To use the words of Mordechaj Canin, the "entire truth" is not to be found here (Canin, 2019, as cited in Datner, 2019, p. 513). We are dealing with the lack of a proper and complete presentation of the truth just after the war because of the strength of the discourse of Polish innocence, which – as Helena Datner emphasizes – "was, by that time, already fully established and developed" (Datner, 2019, p. 517), and which blocked the possibility of speaking about neighbors' participation in the Holocaust. As I have shown, this process had already begun during the Holocaust. Alongside the discourse of Polish innocence, the anti-communist discourse was also developing. This made it impossible to articulate the experiences of those who survived

81 Commentary by Elżbieta Janicka.

82 Commentary by Elżbieta Janicka.

83 Commentary by Elżbieta Janicka

84 Commentary by Elżbieta Janicka.

85 I found a copy of this document in the archives of Nachman Blumental.



Obituary printed by the Central Committee of Jews in Poland (Nachman Blumental Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, courtesy of Miron Blumental and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. © Miron Blumental)

the Holocaust by fleeing to non-German occupied parts of the USSR,⁸⁶ and who constituted the majority of Polish Jewish survivors (Melchior, 2002, p. 54). Both these discourses intersected and legitimized each other. Antisemitic phantasms of the “żydokomuna” and the blood libels were fatal. Survivors functioned in an atmosphere of antisemitic violence.⁸⁷ Their concern for their own safety could have been a decisive factor in the concealment of Polish involvement in the crimes committed.

86 Markus Nesselrodt researched the fate of this group (Nesselrodt, 2019).

87 As Joanna Tokarska-Bakir wrote on the example of Klimontów, “both [discourses] distracted Poles from what was more difficult to accept: from how much some in the Polish provinces had become rich on what had been ‘Jewish’, from crimes committed under patriotic slogans, and from conflict which appeared in the political sympathies of compatriots, many of whom saw communism as their chance” (Tokarska-Bakir, 2011, p. 811).



The grave of Maria Blumental and Ariel Blumental. Jewish cemetery at Okopowa Street in Warsaw (photo by Katrin Stoll, January 17, 2019)



The grave of Maria Blumental and Ariel Blumental. Jewish cemetery at Okopowa Street in Warsaw. In the immediate vicinity there is a grave of ŻOB fighters, betrayed and murdered in the Wyszków forests; exhumed after the war and buried in Okopowa Street (photo by Katrin Stoll, January 17, 2019)

How did Blumental deal with the discrepancy between the official narrative, according to which the Holocaust was exclusively a confrontation between Germans and Jews, and his own experience and that of his family, who were victims of the participation by Polish neighbors in the Holocaust? The following psychoanalytical interpretation of the material comes to mind. There are four forms in Freud's theory that begin with the prefix "Ver": 1) *Verwerfung* (discarding, rejecting), *verwerfen* means to reject something in such a way as to not consider it anymore. You can totally dismiss an idea or thought and act as if the idea or thought never arose. 2) *Verdrängung* (suppression, displacement), 3) *Verneinung* (negation) and 4) *Verleugnung* (denial). Žižek emphasizes that *Verwerfung* is a more radical gesture than *Verdrängung*:

According to Freud, the repressed is intellectually accepted by the subject, since it is named, and at the same time is negated because the subject refuses to recognize it, refuses to recognize him or herself in it. In contrast to this, foreclosure [*Verwerfung*] rejects the term from the symbolic *tout court*. (Žižek, 2008, p. 216)

In the case of Nachman Blumental, we are dealing with *Verwerfung*. That which is *verworfen* is no longer directly accessible. The *Verwerfung* gesture is therefore a gesture of exclusion. "In *Verwerfung*", writes Slavoj Žižek with reference to Lacan, "the content is thrown out of the symbolic, de-symbolized, so that it can only return in the Real [*dans le réel*]" (Žižek, 2013, p. 859).⁸⁸ It is an aspect of reality that drops out of the symbolic order.

There is another factor suggesting that in the case of Blumental, we are talking about *Verwerfung* as a form of dealing with something that is impossible to assimilate. Given the atrocity of the Nazi crimes, including the mass murder of millions of Jewish women, men and children in the Nazi extermination camps, the guilt and responsibility of Hitler's state and German society was, and is, indisputable. Concentration and extermination camps were a manifestation of the ideology of National Socialism and a manifestation of the radicalism of the Nazi extermination project. In his preface to *Obozy*, historian Filip Friedman states: "[...] our epoch owes to the 'nation of thinkers and poets' the emergence of a new branch of science that philosophers had never dreamed of. This new branch of science is called campology" (Friedman, 1946, p. I). Survivor scholars attempted to reconstruct how the Nazis came up with the *Endlösung* project, the ultimate goal of which was the murder of every single Jew in the world, and the destruction, appropriation and removal of anything that the Nazis classified as

⁸⁸ Lacan writes that "it also happens that whatever is refused in the symbolic order, in the sense of *Verwerfung*, reappears in the real" (Lacan, 1993, p. 13). Judith Butler noted the ambiguity of this wording: "Lacan's formulation remains ambiguous with respect to the location of both the refusal and that which is refused. 'Whatever is refused in the symbolic order' suggests that there is a set of signifiers 'in' the symbolic order in the mode of refusal, or indeed, refuse. The French makes it clearer, for it is not what is refused *to* that order, but what in that order is refused. 'Ce qui est refusé *dans* l'ordre symbolique' (my emphasis). If what is refused *reappears* (*resurgit*) [22] or *reparaît* [21]) in the real (*dans le réel*), then it appears first to have appeared in the symbolic prior to its refusal and reappearance in the real" (Butler, 1993, p. 204).

Jewish,⁸⁹ and how the Jewish community struggled to live in the face of ever-present death.

Members of the CŻKH, including Nachman Blumental, wanted to describe the reality of mass murder as accurately as possible and to ascertain how it was that negative radicalism had become normalized. They collected testimonies (Smith, 2019), established the facts, and sought to bring the German perpetrators to justice. Blumental was an expert witness at, among other things, the trial of Joseph Bühler, Hans Frank's deputy, and the trial of Rudolf Höß. The survivor scholars tried to establish the concrete specificity and dimensions of the Holocaust. To this end, the CŻKH cooperated with the Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich (Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes), which initiated an investigation into the sites where the Nazis had built extermination camps. In the years 1944–1947, Nachman Blumental participated in the inspection of these locations. His postwar records about his travels throughout Poland in the 1940s contain descriptions of what he saw and heard in Treblinka, Sobibór and Bełżec. Blumental took part in the work of a Special Commission that traveled on April 1–2, 1947 to the site where the Treblinka extermination camp had been located and “inspected the camp and collected ashes and remains from the burnt victims of Nazism” (AŻIH, CŻKH 303/173, p. 9). It is possible that Blumental also participated in research conducted by the Okręgowa Komisja Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich (District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes) in 1945–1946 on mass murders committed in the Bełżec extermination camp (Kuwatek & Libionka, 2013). Blumental's entry on Bełżec, which is not dated but forms part of his postwar records in the form of hand-written entries from the 1940s, reads as follows:

From Sobibór we went through Rejowiec, Krasnystaw, Zamość, Tomaszów Lubelski to Bełżec. And here, just like in Sobibór – the camp [was, KS] next to the track (the Germans did not add a branch rail). The space is not big. Along the anti-tank ditches (border of the Interessengebiet of Germany and the SS) a guardhouse on the border of the later camp. No signs of building. Ashes, bones, utensils, a piece of rail. A mound of rubble was built (but do they come from camp buildings?). The railway station in Bełżec and surrounding houses burnt down as a result of the bombing. – Trains with ammunition at the station and documents and photos kept by the photographer were destroyed)⁹⁰. In one building – near the camp – that survived [,] lived and lives a railway worker who was in the camp a few times to set up wagons that rolled off the rails. It was number 1 only in the first part of the camp by the ramp; the rest was fenced off and covered with branches that were periodically replaced with fresh ones. The local population knew exactly what was going on here. – The Ukrainian school director lives in B., who – as he says himself – had some records as to the fate of the transports. He claims about a million perished here. The smell of corpses reached the hospital in Tomaszów. Doctors even talked about morbus bilsiniensis; the bite of a fly that carried the germ from the corpses (doctor's Statement). He claims that about 1,000,000 were killed in B.; a German

89 As for the source of this policy, I share the position taken by Klaus Theweleit: “The overwhelming *energy* of everything ‘Jewish’ was to be handed over to the new German superpower. The source of such behavior was not simply ‘hatred of everything Jewish’; as Daniel Jonah Goldhagen explains superficially (rightly criticized by Jonathan Littell). It was about fundamental *jealousy*; *jealousy and rage* over the position of the ‘chosen people’; which the ‘German’ as ‘Aryan’ demanded for himself” (Theweleit, 2009, p. 122). Emphasis in original – K.S.

90 The opening parenthesis is missing in the original.

accountant who came to drink with the locals knows that a ceremony celebrating the gassing of the one millionth Jew in the camp was taking place. On this occasion, the commandant was awarded a medal – the crew – the black Ukrainians had a lot of money. People traded with them. You could get anything from the rural population! (Manuscript Notes by Nachman Blumental, Nachman Blumental Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research)

The Germans failed to cover up the traces of their crimes: Blumental saw the materiality of the mass murders: ashes,⁹¹ bones and the remains of those murdered in the former extermination camp built by the SS on the outskirts of the village of Bełżec (Kuwałek, 2010). He recorded the physical proximity of the “local population” to the camp. Regarding the village of Bełżec, it must be remembered that the camp perimeter “was about 150 meters from the nearest buildings. It can therefore be said that the mass murder took place literally under the windows of Polish households” (Kuwałek & Libionka, 2013, p. 105). The inhabitants’ knowledge was therefore very specific. “They knew exactly” what the function of Bełżec was. Among those who disseminated accurate knowledge were Polish railwaymen, “who more than once carried transports to the Bełżec station and watched their movement” (Kuwałek, 2010, p. 182). Evidence of the mass murders also hung in the air: winds conveyed the reality of the burning of the bodies of the murdered – which “probably began at the end of October and beginning of November 1942” (Kuwałek, 2010, p. 53)⁹² – as far as Tomaszów Lubelski, which is 7.1 km from Bełżec.

As in Wielopole Skrzyńskie, Nachman Blumental asked neighbors on the spot what they had seen and what they knew. The fact that the doctor and the headmaster of the Ukrainian school estimated the number of victims as twice as high as the actual figure is an expression of their view that the mass murders were an unprecedented event. The camp staff, and the camp itself, were a source of income for neighbors. Blumental documented the interaction between the German perpetrators and the villagers: the perpetrators’ drunkenness was an integral part of their everyday life after murder. Neighbors benefited from the plunder of the property of Jews deported to Bełżec. Trade with the guards flourished. Blumental: “You could get everything from the peasants”.

Blumental’s records on the Holocaust sites from the 1940s show that he was aware that any conceptualization of the Holocaust that excludes the role played by Poles does not reflect the truth. Polish society had accepted the mass murder of Jews. In such

91 Canin describes the trade in human ashes. Peasants living near the Nazi extermination camps continued the Nazi process of the *Verwertung* of people after liberation from German occupation. The peasants “noticed that the ashes that the Germans had scattered in their fields in order to cover up the traces of their crime served as an excellent fertilizer; they noticed that the cattle grazing in these fields got fat and gave more milk. Ash is a kind of manna from heaven, it brings wealth and strengthens the peasant economy. So the peasants began to ‘cultivate’ bags of ash. The ‘commodity’ had its price, with the market price rising day by day. The wild trade in human ashes has begun” (Canin, 2019, p. 484). Henryk Grynberg wrote many years later: “There are no Jews at Polish markets, but there is still trade with Jews. Even the dead” (Grynberg, 2003, p. 38). Thus, business as usual.

92 As Robert Kuwałek attests, “during [...] archaeological research, 33 mass graves were found” (Kuwałek, 2010, p. 53).

a constellation, the disclosure of the truth on the part of survivor scholars was a threat to those who revealed it, and to the culture and identity of the majority.

V. The Participation of the Blue Police: The Interrogation of Observers as Witnesses forming Part of the Investigation under Article 1 Decree of August 31, 1944

Whatever human beings do, they can always act differently.
(Lewy, 2017, p. 136)

***Judenjagd* Polish Style**

According to Blumental, Nazi language was one of the most important instruments for the physical annihilation of the Jews (Blumental, 1947, 1948, 1957). For the perpetrators, it was about hiding the truth of the Nazi genocidal project from its victims. Hence, a kind of bilingualism⁹³ in the form of “innocent words” (Blumental, 1947). According to Blumental, any examination of the Holocaust should include analysis of the perpetrators’ speech and the message hidden therein. One term in this language of the German perpetrators is *Judenjagd*.

As for the actions of the Polish police after the so-called liquidation of ghettos by the Germans, we are able to determine – thanks to microhistoric research – the parameters of the process by which both those fleeing and those in hiding were caught. Jan Grabowski, author of *Hunt for the Jews*, a study of the Holocaust focusing on the district of Węgrów (Grabowski, 2013), and the author of a monograph on the participation of the Polish Blue Police in the extermination of Jews, writes the following:

It turns out that in the district of Węgrów, the Polish police practically always participated in the capture of Jews during this period. The Blue Police murdered Jews on their own or took part in executions together with German gendarmes. Significantly, the Germans themselves practically never set out to search for Jews without Blue Police assistance – in most recorded cases, they went into the field accompanied by Polish officers. Hunting for Jews was similar in the counties of Miechowski, Nowy Targ, Bochnia, Dąbrowski and Dębica. Polish police, acting jointly with the German gendarmerie or conducting actions on their own, were responsible for most of the murders of Jews in hiding. (Grabowski, 2020, p. 190)

93 Regarding the question “why genocidal acts did not obtain full affirmation in their course, why even in top secret documents they were masked with code names such as ‘*Umsiedlung*’ – i.e. resettlement, meaning execution”, Aspernicus states “that this bilingualism manifests the effort to bring forth the irreducible. The Germans were to be noble Aryans, the first Europeans, heroic victors and, at the same time, killers of the defenseless. First they talked, second they acted, and hence came a voluminous dictionary of renaming and forgeries such as ‘*Arbeit macht frei*’, ‘*Umsiedlung*’, or the *Endlösung* itself as euphemisms for the crime. It is in this hypocrisy that, in the author’s opinion, Germany’s belonging to Christian culture – against the aspirations of Hitlerism – is revealed, because Germans were so impregnated with it, despite their best will to go beyond the Gospel, they could not do so in everything. Within this culture, says the author, even if everything can be done, not everything can still be said” (Lem, 1980, pp. 281–282).

Blue Policemen Wilhelm Jaki and Józef Kapelusz took part in the Nazi *Endlösung* project. Who was Józef Kapelusz? Kapelusz was a policeman at the station in Wielopole Skrzyńskie before 1939⁹⁴ who continued to work there throughout the German occupation. According to Józef Barszcz, another officer working at the same police station, Kapelusz was transferred to the station in Wielopole at the beginning of 1943.⁹⁵ Kapelusz, Barszcz and Jaki took part in the *Judenjagd*. They acted together.⁹⁶ Wilhelm Jaki served at the German gendarmerie station in Dębica, in an intelligence capacity.⁹⁷ He was also a member of the Home Army unit that operated in the Dębica District (Frydel, 2018, p. 475). In January 1943, he was transferred to Dębica as a Blue Police officer.⁹⁸ He also served at the Blue Police station in Wielopole (Frydel, 2018, p. 180) in a supervisory capacity.⁹⁹ As part of this function, he was responsible for crimes against Jews in and around Wielopole.

Jan Chmura, mayor (*sołtys*) of the Brzeziny community during the German occupation, provided the following facts about the murders committed by Jaki:

[...] in the summer of 1943, Wilhelm Jaki's expedition murdered 6–7 people of Jewish nationality with Polish citizenship [...]. As the farmers told me, the gendarme Wilhelm Jaki personally shot the aforementioned people. Another such incident happened in the summer of 1943 in the Brzeziny community at Andrzej Gęsior's farm, where the gendarme Wilhelm Jaki shot three people with Polish citizenship and Jewish nationality. In the fall of 1943, the gendarme Wilhelm Jaki shot a mother with a child, also a jewish [*sic!*] woman, together with her child near the community house in Brzeziny. At the same time, he shot a jewish [*sic!*] woman and a child next to Wadzisz's [*sic!*] farm. At the end of 1943, in the Brzeziny community, the gendarme Wilhelm Jaki shot citizen Uryniak [...]. At the same time, he shot citizens Zbylut, both of Polish nationality. In the early spring of 1944, at Czarnecki's [*sic!*] farm,¹⁰⁰ in the Brzeziny

94 IPN, Rz 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego, Tarnów, 8 kwietnia 1947 r., Radzik Ludwik oficer śledczy Pow. Urzędu Bezp. Publ. w Tarnowie przesłucha w charakterze podejrzanego: Kapelusz Józef [Transcript of interrogation of suspect, Tarnów, April 8, 1947, Radzik Ludwik investigating officer, District Office of Public Security in Tarnów interrogates the suspect: Józef Kapelusz], pp. 0049–0050, here p. 0049.

95 IPN, Rz 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania świadka, Dębica, 5 lutego 1951 r. [Transcript of witness interrogation, Dębica, February 5, 1951], pp. 0074–0078, here p. 0075.

96 On the cooperation between Barszcz, Kapelusz and Malczyński in hunting Jews in the village of Mała in 1943 and 1944, see IPN, Rz 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania świadka, Dębica, 15 stycznia 1951 r. [Transcript of witness interrogation, Dębica, January 15, 1951].

97 IPN, Rz 353/278, Wojew. Urząd Bezp. Publ., oświadczenie Wilhelma Jana Jakiego złożone w dniu 24 kwietnia 1947 r. [Voiv. Office of Public Security, Wilhelm Jan Jaki's statement submitted on April 24, 1947], p. 0100. Jaki was born on March 31, 1911. In 1937, he joined the Polish state police. Under the German occupation, "he volunteered for the Blue Police, where he was admitted, and until the end of 1942 he performed the function of an ordinary traffic officer in Warsaw". IPN, Rz 353/278, Szef W.U.B.P. w Rzeszowie, 30. IX. 1950 r., akt oskarżenia przeciwko 1/ Jaki[emu] Wilhelmowi 2/ Wodzisz[owi] Stanisławowi [Head of the W.U.B.P. (Voiv. Office of Public Security) in Rzeszów, 30. IX. 1950, indictment against 1/ Jaki Wilhelm 2/ Wodzisz Stanisław], pp. 0169–0175, here: p. 0171.

98 IPN, Rz 353/278, p. 0171.

99 Jaki knew German. "For exemplary performance as a translator, he was promoted by the commander of the gendarmerie in Dębica to the position of supervisor of individual policemen at the Blue Police station in the Wielopole commune, Dębica, on behalf of the gendarmerie". IPN, Rz 353/278, Szef W.U.B.P. w Rzeszowie, 30. IX. 1950 r., akt oskarżenia przeciwko 1/ Jaki[emu] Wilhelmowi 2/ Wodzisz[owi] Stanisławowi [Head of the W.U.B.P. (Voiv. Office of Public Security) in Rzeszów, 30. IX. 1950, indictment against 1/ Jaki Wilhelm 2/ Wodzisz Stanisław], pp. 0169–0175, here: p. 0171.

100 In the postwar files, the name "Czarnecki" appears. During field research on July 3, 2020, I heard the name Czernecki from the residents. In the witness report from September 14, 1950, we can also read the name of

community, the gendarme Wilhelm Jaki shot 5–6 people, Polish citizens of Jewish nationality, including one doctor [,] a lawyer and their relatives. [...] ¹⁰¹

For the murder of five Jews¹⁰² hiding in a bunker under Franciszek Czernecki's barn in Brzeziny, in February 1944, Jaki implicated all the officers based at the police station in Wielopole, including Józef Kapelusz.¹⁰³

The witness Franciszek Czernecki testified on December 9, 1950 that in Brzeziny, from 1943 to the spring of 1944, he was hiding Jews in a barn: four men and one woman. His testimony clashes with the fear-of-the-death penalty argument, which – in the Polish public discourse – is used as a defense mechanism in explaining the dominant attitude towards Jews.¹⁰⁴ None of the many people who appear in this article lost their lives for hiding Jews or for any other form of dealings with Jews. Czernecki testified that the Jews – apart from the Listwan brothers whose names he was not able to remember¹⁰⁵ – hid with him for eight months. I quote from the report of Czernecki's interrogation:

In the spring of 1944, it was 4 in the morning, Władysław Sikora, from Brzeziny, knocked on the window of my apartment and called me to open it. I went out to the field and saw Blue Policemen, one of whom was named Kapelusz [...] handcuffed me and asked me if I hadn't any jews [*sic!*]. I replied that I did not know what he was talking about, that I had no jews [*sic!*] in the barn, and then he led me to the barn. After reaching the barn, I noticed that it was surrounded by Blue Police. From among the policemen gathered there I know Wilhelm

Czernecki. IPN, Rz 358/278, p. 0138. It seems to me that the residents' memory of the villagers is a more reliable source. For this reason, I decided to use "Czernecki."

101 IPN, Rz 358/278, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Jana Chmury z 14 września 1950 r. [Transcript of interrogation of witness Jan Chmura of September 14, 1950], pp. 0149–0150.

102 According to Tomasz Frydel's findings, they were the doctor Izaak Schuldenfrei with his sister and the lawyer Izrael Laufbahn. Izaak Schuldenfrei is mentioned as a victim of the Holocaust in the Dębica memorial book – together with his family: father Aron Dawid, mother China, sisters Rojza, Sima, Mirla, Chaja and Cyła, and brother Symcha. Ireneusz Socha from Dębica, who published a Polish translation of the Dębica memorial book, provided me with this information, for which I am deeply grateful.

103 IPN, Rz 358/111, Akta w sprawie karnej prowadzonej przeciwko: Józef Kapelusz, imię ojca: Mikołaj, ur. 23.3.1912 r., Protokół przesłuchania świadka Franciszka Czarneckiego [*sic!*], Pow. Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa w Dębicy, 9 grudnia 1950 r. [Files in the criminal case against: Józef Kapelusz, father's name: Mikołaj, b. March 23, 1912, Transcript of interrogation of witness Franciszek Czarnecki [*sic!*], District Office of Security in Dębica, December 9, 1950], pp. 0127–0128.

104 As Elżbieta Janicka explains: "In occupied Poland, the death penalty was imposed for breeding an unmarked pig, for having a radio, for participating in a conspiracy, for trading in foreign currencies and gold. It would take a long time to complete the list. A comprehensive academic study on this subject was published five years ago (Wrzyszczyński, 2008). As we have written in *Polska panika moralna*, helping Jews was always isolated and undertaken against the general attitude, not in accordance with it. Which was why it was so extremely dangerous. The death penalty does not explain the scale of unforced denunciations or spontaneous expulsion of Jews from successive hiding places. In other words, it does not provide grounds for understanding the lack of salutary, life-giving indifference to the fate of the Jews. And in Poland, the main problem was precisely the lack of passivity and indifference" (Janicka, 2014). See also Janicka, 2015, p. 210. Jan Gross emphasizes that [...] "in other activities, including those carried out under the threat of death by Germans, Poles got involved *en masse*" (Gross, 1986, p. 20).

105 On September 14, 1950, Czernecki testified: "The gendarme, Wilhelm Jaki, ordered the Jews to come out of the bunker, only one named Listwan came out, then a doctor, a lawyer and Listwan's brother came out, all badly wounded in their legs. Later they took away the doctor's sister who had been shot and whose name I do not remember right now. The gendarme Jaki [...] started shooting at those Jews who were still alive, all of whom were shot to death". IPN, Rz 353/278, protokół przesłuchania świadka, Franciszka Czarneckiego [*sic!*], [Transcript of interrogation of witness Franciszek Czarnecki], pp. 0141–0142, here: p. 0141.

Jaki, Kapelusz – whose first name I don't know – Barszcz – whose first name I don't know – and Lewandowski – whose first name I don't know, and there were even more of them, but I do not know their last names. Then Wilhelm Jaki, Kapelusz and Barszcz entered the barn and Jaki ordered Barszcz to shoot into the bunker, but his rifle jammed because a shell got stuck in the rifle, while Jaki fired his machine gun several times. Then Wilhelm Jaki ordered Władysław Sikora to call the farmers in order to find the bunker. After the peasants came, they removed two trees from the wall of the bunker, as a result of which there was a hole straight from the top, and Wilhelm Jaki fired into this hole with his machine gun. Then Jaki ordered those Jews [*sic!*] to be taken out. After they were pulled out, I saw that the woman was already killed and the rest were seriously injured. Then Wilhelm Jaki approached the wounded lying on the ground and wrote up a report, though I do not know what he asked them. After interrogating them, Jaki took each of the wounded one by one and fired a pistol into the back of their heads.¹⁰⁶

Jaki himself admitted¹⁰⁷ that he had shot to death all the people at Franciszek Czernecki's place. Władysław Sikora, who was mentioned by Czernecki, testified that Kapelusz ordered him to call Czernecki out of the apartment, which he did. Sikora remembers two of the shot Jews: according to him, their names were List. He did not remember their first names. According to Sikora, "they were commonly called Tratlaki".¹⁰⁸ While Sikora stated that he did not see the execution, Michał Chmura testified that Sikora had ordered him to go to Czernecki's. Chmura described how the policemen Jaki, Kapelusz and Barszcz included him in the crime carried out against those hiding in the barn. His description shows that it was all about killing those categorized as Jews before the end of the German occupation. In other words, the Poles did not have much time left to murder Jews anymore. As for the names and identities of the victims, Chmura also mentions the name List. Among those murdered were, as testified, a doctor with his sister and a lawyer. The fact that he did not know their surnames may indicate that, compared to the Lists from Brzeziny, this is a reference to Jews from Dębica who sought refuge in the countryside. Here is an excerpt from Chmura's interrogation:

I was called [...] to the barn, after entering I noticed a Blue Policeman, Jaki [...], a Blue Policeman, Kapelusz, and a Blue Policeman, Barszcz [...], I knew these three men well. After I entered, Jaki ordered me to enter the bunker to see who was there, but I did not want to. Then, Jaki started screaming through the entrance to the bunker constructed at Czarnecki's [*sic!*] where the Jews were hidden, for them to come out, but no one spoke, at that time Jaki started shooting into the bunker with a machine gun. After the shooting, I heard a scream from the bunker, we are defenseless, my sister is dying, to which he responded by calling on

106 IPN, Rz 358/111, Akta w sprawie karnej prowadzonej przeciwko: Józef Kapelusz, imię ojca: Mikołaj, ur. 23.3.1912 r., Protokół przesłuchania świadka Franciszka Czarneckiego [*sic!*], Pow. Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa w Dębicy, 9 grudnia 1950 r. [Files in the criminal case against: Józef Kapelusz, father's name: Mikołaj, b. March 23, 1912, Transcript of interrogation of witness Franciszek Czarnecki [*sic!*], District Office of Security in Dębica, December 9, 1950], pp. 0127–0128.

107 IPN, Rz 353/278, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego, 31 sierpnia 1950 r. [Transcript of interrogation of suspect, August 31, 1950], pp. 0073–0074. Jaki testified that he shot to death "those who were hiding in the bunker [and] the others left the bunker, whom he then" shot to death "in such a way" that he ordered "them to lie face down on the ground and shot them in the back of the head". According to Jaki, "there were about 6–7 people in this bunker, [...] I shot them all to death". Ibid., p. 0074.

108 IPN, Rz 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Władysława Sikory, Pow. Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa w Dębicy, 27 stycznia 1951 r. [Transcript of interrogation of witness Władysław Sikora, District Office of Security in Dębica, January 27, 1951], pp. 0129–0130, here: p. 0129.

her to get out. Then Jaki called on the rest to come out, at which point List came out, commonly known as Tratlak from Brzeziny. Jaki asked him about his profession, and he responded farmer, so he ordered him to go sit in a corner of the barn. Then came the second List, who also responded that he was a farmer, and Jaki ordered him into the corner. Then the third one came out, Jaki asked him about his profession, he replied [,] that he was a doctor, he treated people, and Jaki ordered him to come out to the field, the fourth one, a lawyer, came out, and he, also under Jaki's order, went out to the field, where Jaki wrote up a report. This doctor and lawyer could not come out themselves [,] because they had been shot in the legs, we pulled them out by the hands, which they had raised up. The names of this doctor and lawyer I did not know and I do not know. Then Jaki ordered us to take the doctor's shot sister out of the bunker, whom we pulled out with Wrona, and with one other one. On the orders of Kapelusz, I collected the scattered about money in the bunker, which I gave to Kapelusz. [...] After leaving Czarnecki, all the Jews were already shot.¹⁰⁹

According to this testimony, Jaki murdered the List (Listwan?) brothers on the spot, and the others (a doctor, the doctor's sister and a lawyer, i.e. representatives of the intelligentsia) in the field.

Franciszek Andrzeosik, who was questioned as a witness in the case against Jaki, lived next to the farmer Czernecki. He testified that he had heard shots and saw five corpses (four men and one woman) and that "the bodies were buried on the orders of the gendarme Jaki, next to [Czernecki's] farm buildings". According to Andrzeosik, this grave is "in the same place to this day".¹¹⁰ The phrase "to this day" has not lost its relevance. The unmarked burial site is still there. In the same location (49°56'23.0"N 21°30'32.0"E). On July 3, 2020, a farmer living next door showed me this place, which serves as a storage site.

People are under the linden. The linden tree was still small then, as a neighbor told me, who phoned friends in my presence asking "what are the names of these Jews". Did the neighbors plant it on the site at the time along with the little woods around? Landscape as camouflage? (Janicka et al., 2020). Any attempt at camouflage is doomed to failure. The landscape cannot function as a screen because it cannot camouflage the reality of this particular crime or the active participation in general of the local non-Jews in the Holocaust. There is a doghouse next to the storage site. People lie like dogs in the ground. In this context, it is difficult not to think about the following excerpt from Joanna Tokarska-Bakir's book *Legendy o krwi*:

The symbolic image of Jews as dogs from the Middle Ages occupies the thinking of antisemitic writers, bringing down upon Jews real persecution, the reminiscences of which in the form of the *Sauhund*-insult survived until the twentieth century. (Tokarska-Bakir, 2008, p. 19)

109 IPN, Rz 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Michała Chmury, Pow. Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa w Dębicy, 27 stycznia 1951 r. [Transcript of interrogation of witness Michał Chmura, District Security Office in Dębica, January 27, 1951], pp. 0132–0133, here: p. 0132.

110 IPN, Rz 353/278, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Franciszka Andrzeosika, 13 września 1950 r. [Transcript of interrogation of witness Franciszek Andrzeosik, September 13, 1950], p. 0109.



A small mass grave, Brzeziny (photo by Jos Stübner, July 2, 2020 courtesy of the same. © Jos Stübner)

In a footnote, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir draws attention to a recorded incident in which a Gestapo officer announced to a member of the Judenrat that he would die like a dog (Tokarska-Bakir, 2008, p. 190, footnote 213).

What happened to Czernecki? After the war, he left Brzeziny for Lublin. A farmer from Brzeziny, who lived near the place where Czernecki's farm was located, told me about this during my field research on July 3, 2020.

Was Kapelusz brought to justice for the crimes he committed against the Jews in Brzeziny? The indictment against Józef Kapelusz dated July 26, 1951 states that:

[...] in February 1944 in Brzeziny [...] he took part in the capture and shooting of five people of Jewish nationality with undetermined names, he handcuffed Franciszek Czarnecki, forcing him to identify these Jews.¹¹¹

On December 13, 1951, the Provincial Court in Rzeszów acquitted the accused Kapelusz of the charges contained in the indictment, including the charge that in February 1944 in Brzeziny, "together with other officers, he took part in the capture and shooting of 5"¹¹² Jews on Czernecki's farm. The court found only that on February 29, 1944,

111 IPN, Rz, 358/111, Akt oskarżenia przeciwko Józefowi Kapeluszowi, dnia 26 lipca 1951 r. [Indictment against Józef Kapelusz, dated July 26, 1951], pp. 0204–0206, here: p. 0204.

112 IPN, Rz 358/111, sygn. akt. IV. K. 248/51, Wyrok Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Rzeszowie [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Rzeszów], pp. 0355–0360, here: pp. 0355–0356. The court rejected the testimony of two witnesses

[...] in the village of Brzeziny in Dębica County, a group of Blue Policemen led by Wilhelm Jaki, with the possible participation of a German gendarme, exposed on the farm of Franciszek Czarnecki [*sic!*] the hiding place of several people of Jewish nationality who, after being led out of the hiding place, were murdered by the aforementioned Jaki.¹¹³

It is not stated who called the Blue Police. While the indictment does not mention the possible participation of a German gendarme, the Provincial Court, in its statement, considers it possible that a German participated. Here, we hear echoes of Perechodnik.

In summation, Wilhelm Jaki and Józef Kapelusz usually acted together. Jaki agreed with the German gendarmerie that “they would do the work with the help of Józef Kapelusz, as long as the local gendarme would not interfere with my work, and would report directly to Buchaltz”.¹¹⁴ On August 31, 1950, Jaki testified that, together with the Blue Policeman Kapelusz, he conducted “reconnaissance of the hiding places of Polish citizens of Jewish nationality in Wielopole”.¹¹⁵

According to the transcript of the interrogation of suspect Wilhelm Jaki dated September 5, 1950, in the summer of 1943 he was “on secondment at the Wielopole station, Dębica County, where” he took care of “the remaining Jews in hiding”. To this end, he set up:

[...] in Dębica County a network of agents that would allow me to work out the above-mentioned categories of people. In the summer of 1943, I searched for Jews in the Wodzisz farm in the Brzeziny community, I don’t recall the first name. Because, during the search, I found letters that showed he had contact with Jews. I decided to engage Wodzisz to cooperate in this case, so that he would follow my plan, I used repressive measures and threatened him with consequences from the German authorities. Under pressure from my threats and physical repression, Wodzisz succumbed and agreed to cooperate with me.¹¹⁶

who confirmed Kapelusz’s involvement in the capture and murder of five Jews. In the justification we read: “Witness Sikora, who initially recognized the accused as a participant in the action, then twice at the trial withdrew [his statement], and he [author’s note: could no longer be certain that] he recognized the accused as previously stated in the investigation [...] who was to have called him from home, but it was then dark and he was scared. What is also characteristic of his testimony at the hearing is that on the second day after the action, he heard someone saying that Kapelusz had participated [...] whom [Kapelusz] he did not know well himself – which would indicate that the witness does not entirely base his diagnosis on his own observations. As a whole, the testimony of this witness made at the hearing is shaky at best and uncertain and should therefore be assessed as not presenting any probative value. What remains as the only firmly incriminating testimony is that of the witness Michał Chmura, who claims that he knows the defendant to be a participant in the action [...] it is significant, however, that in the investigation this witness does not describe in more detail the participation and behavior of the accused in action, he recognized him as having been present there and that, in the end, he collected some money based on the orders he had given him. At the hearing, however, as to the participation of the accused, he only testifies that he saw him walking around the yard and testifies differently that he gave the collected money not to the accused, but to another policeman, Barszcz”. Ibid., pp. 0357–0358.

113 IPN, Rz 358/111, sygn. akt. IV. K. 248/51, Wyrok Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Rzeszowie [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Rzeszów], pp. 0355–0360, here: p. 09355.

114 See also: IPN, Rz 358/111, Odpis z opisu: Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego, 31 sierpnia 1950 r. [Transcript of description: Transcript of interrogation of suspect, August 31, 1950], pp. 0117–0119, here: p. 0117.

115 Ibid., pp. 0117–0118.

116 IPN, Rz 353/278, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Wilhelma Jakiego, 5.8.1950 r. [Transcript of interrogation of suspect Wilhelm Jaki, August 5, 1950], pp. 0091–0092, here: p. 0091. The investigation against Jaki and

An armed Blue Policeman in Wielopole urged Wodzisz to “cooperate”, using physical and emotional violence. He blackmailed and manipulated him from a position of power. During the interrogation on September 5, 1950, Jaki testified that “Wodzisz, from the summer [1943] to the spring of 1944, showed” him “several times the hiding places of Jews [...] and that he once showed me the place where I caught the 2 jewish [*sic!*] women near the forest in Brzeziny, who I shot in Wielopole in the Jewish cemetery”.¹¹⁷ The name Wodzisz appears in Blumental’s notes: he recorded that Maria and Ariel were at Wodzisz’s place for about two months.

During the interrogation in August 1950, Jaki recalled the fact that he had once given Wodzisz “pants from murdered Jews”.¹¹⁸ It seems that for Wodzisz, hiding Jews during the Holocaust was a transaction.¹¹⁹ Interrogated as a suspect, Stanisław Wodzisz, born in 1894 and living in Brzeziny, testified on August 21, 1950 that “during a German round-up of Jews [...] Lengerka Bronisława came to [his] house with her daughter Maria¹²⁰ and children”. When they came to him, they “begged” him to “hide them” and to “give them something to eat”, and they said they would pay him. Wodzisz testified: “I hid them in the recess and gave them food and they paid me”. He estimated that “the hiding went on for about a month”.¹²¹ They paid him. Did the hiding not last longer because of a lack of money? It is worth noting that Wodzisz is silent on this subject. He only mentions the threat posed by the Germans.¹²² Wodzisz himself admitted that, acting under pressure applied by Jaki and Kapelusz, he was also involved in catching and handing over Jews.¹²³

Wodzisz began on August 23, 1950 and ended on September 26, 1950.

117 IPN, Rz 353/278, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Wilhelma Jakiego, 5.8.1950 r. [Transcript of interrogation of suspect Wilhelm Jaki, August 5, 1950], pp. 0091–0092, here: p. 0091.

118 IPN, Rz 353/278, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Wilhelma Jakiego, 5.8.1950 r. [Transcript of interrogation of suspect Wilhelm Jaki, August 5, 1950], pp. 0091–0092, here: p. 0092.

119 “We know that there were many people who treated the hiding of Jews as a form of income and that they came from all social strata” (Grabowski, 2008a, p. 83; see also Grabowski, 2008b).

120 Maria Blumental’s mother’s name was Paulina. Paulina Tewel’s maiden name was Sutzin. Thus, Wodzisz is talking about another woman with a child.

121 IPN, Rz 353/278, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Stanisława Wodzisz, Rzeszów dnia 21.VIII. 1950 r., Kuchta Władysław, Oficer Śledczy Woj. Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w Rzeszowie [Transcript of interrogation of suspect Stanisław Wodzisz, August 21, 1950, Kuchta Władysław, Investigation Officer of the Voiv. Public Security Office in Rzeszów], pp. 0055–0057, here: p. 0056.

122 IPN, Rz 353/278, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Stanisława Wodzisz, Rzeszów dnia 21.VIII. 1950 r., Kuchta Władysław, Oficer Śledczy Woj. Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w Rzeszowie [Transcript of interrogation of suspect Stanisław Wodzisz, August 21, 1950, Kuchta Władysław, Investigation Officer of the Voiv. Public Security Office in Rzeszów], pp. 0055–0057, here: p. 0055.

123 Ibid., pp. 0056–0057.

The indictment of September 30, 1950 accuses Stanisław Wodzis of the following:

[...] in 1943, the date has not been established more precisely, in the area of the Brzeziny community, Dębica County, as an informant of the gendarmerie, working with the German state, [Wodzis] pointed out, to the gendarme Jaki, the hiding place of two people of Jewish nationality, who were being persecuted by the Germans, as a result of which the gendarme shot them.¹²⁴

In the statement of grounds, we read that Stanisław Wodzis

[...] discovered, as he himself states, two Jews in hiding named N.N. and informed by phone from the Brzeziny post office, the accused Wilhelm Jaki, who was at that time at the Wielopole station. The accused Jaki, according to the information received from the accused Stanisław Wodzis, went with constable Kapelusz and others to the place indicated by [...] Wodzis and there he personally shot the two Jews caught. [...] In addition, the accused Stanisław Wodzis, in 1943, informed the accused Wilhelm Jaki about the hiding places of Jews around Brzeziny [...].¹²⁵

The Criminal Case against Kapelusz:

The Investigation into the Murder of Maria Blumental and Ariel Blumental

Józef Kapelusz was first arrested in April 1947 in a case¹²⁶ unrelated to the murder of the Blumentals in Wielopole. The District Court found Józef Kapelusz guilty of a crime under Article 2 of the decree of August 31, 1944. On May 22, 1948,¹²⁷ “he was sentenced to a year and 1 month in prison for having collaborated with the Germans”.¹²⁸

Thanks to Nachman Blumental’s letter to the District Court in Tarnów dated August 9, 1948, quoted earlier, the Milicja Obywatelska (Citizens’ Militia, M.O.) station in Wielopole – on orders from the prosecutor’s office of the District Court in Tarnów – conducted an investigation into the murder of Maria Blumental and heard witness

124 IPN, Rz 353/278, Szef W.U.B.P. w Rzeszowie, akt oskarżenia przeciwko 1/ Jaki[emu] Wilhelmowi 2/ Wodzis[owi] Stanisławowi z 30 września 1950 r. [Head of the W.U.B.P. (Voiv. Office of Public Security) in Rzeszów, 30. IX. 1950, indictment against 1/ Jaki Wilhelm 2/ Wodzis Stanisław, May 30, 1950], pp. 0169–0175, here: p. 0170.

125 Ibid., p. 0172.

126 IPN, Rz 358/111, Prokuratura Sądu Okręgowego w Tarnowie z dnia 1 sierpnia 1947 r., Akt oskarżenia przeciwko Józefowi Kapeluszowi [The Prosecutor’s Office of the District Court in Tarnów of August 1, 1947, indictment against Józef Kapelusz], Nr. akt VI. Ds: 580/47, pp. 0031–0032.

127 Of the charges (I; II a/–d/; III), three were related to the participation of Kapelusz as a serving constable of the Polish Police during the Holocaust. He was accused of “II. [...] a/ in the winter of 1942, he went to the area of the Bronisze community, where three Jewish families were living, totaling about 11 people, put them on a cart, and then transported them to the P.P. in Łączki Kucharskie, from where they were transported to Ropczyce and placed in the local ghetto; b/ at the end of 1942 in Ropczyce, by taking part in the cordoning off of the ghetto and its supervision, he contributed to making it impossible for the Jewish population gathered in the ghetto to escape from the place of concentration; [...] III. During the German occupation, as constable in the P.P. and working with authorities of the German state, he acted to the detriment of civilians wanted and persecuted by German authorities in such a way that in the Mała community of Wielopole, he captured two Jewish women in the forest and handed them over to the German authorities”. IPN, Rz 358/111, Sąd Okręgowy w Tarnowie Wydział VI. Karny, sentencja wyroku z 22 maja 1948 r. [District Court in Tarnów, VI Criminal Division, judgment sentence of May 22, 1948], pp. 0163–0165, here: pp. 0163–0164. For the opinion of the court, see Rz 358/111, Sąd Okręgowy w Tarnowie Wydział VI. Karny, sentencja wyroku z 22 maja 1948 r. [District Court in Tarnów, VI Criminal Division, judgment sentence of May 22, 1948], pp. 0166–170, here: pp. 0167–0170.

128 IPN, Rz 358/111, Prokuratura Powiatowa w Tarnowie, Wzmianka, Tarnów, 10 lutego 1951 r. [District Prosecutor’s Office in Tarnów, Wzmianka, Tarnów, February 10, 1951], p. 0035.

testimony. In the M.O. report dated November 23, 1948, it was established on the basis of testimony that

[...] Dr. Maria Blumental and her child were shot by a German named Hindus [*sic!*] in June 1943 and [that] those who participated in capturing the Jews were officers of the P.P. [Polish Police] in Wielopole, namely: Wilhelm Jaki, N. Malczewski [*sic!*], N. Lewandowski, and Kape-lusz.¹²⁹

It is worth noting that according to this finding, it was only Polish policemen who were responsible for the persecution and arrest of Maria Blumental and her child. The quotation shows that they acted independently and on their own initiative, without the Germans. This was established on the basis of testimony from neighbors. We learn about the absence of the Germans from the interrogation of Franciszek Wodzis, ¹³⁰ who lived – like Stanisław Wodzis – in Brzeziny. Interrogated on November 10, 1948 at the M.O. station in Wielopole as a witness, Franciszek Wodzis testified, for the record, that The Jews [żydki] of Brzeziny, called Tratlaki, brought to our house a woman with a child, who was 3 or 4 years old, this woman and her child were with us for 2 weeks, some time later these same Jews [żydki] came and took her from us, where they took her, I don't know.¹³¹

He claimed that he did not remember the woman's name.¹³² Then we read: "I heard that a Jewish woman was hiding at citizen Stasiowski Wojciech's place, but whether it was the one who was here, I cannot say, I also heard that policemen from Wielopole took her from Stasiowski, and of the policemen, I knew only Kapelusz and Lewandowski".¹³³ According to Blumental's notes, that was Maria Blumental. At the end of his testimony, Wodzis stated that he did not know "what happened to that Jewish woman in Wielopole".¹³⁴ It strikes the author of this article that Wodzis preferred not to know what he saw.¹³⁵ It could be argued that he could not possibly *not* see because the *Judenjagd* was carried out in broad daylight and it was known that the Jews who had been caught

129 IPN, Rz 358/111, p. 0006. This report was written by M. Peters. Moreover, it was established that "Wilhelm Jakij was an officer in the 'Blue' police and served at the P.P. [Police Police] in Wielopole during the German occupation, he worked in civilian clothes and spoke German well".

130 Franciszek Wodzis was born on February 15, 1920 in Brzeziny, Debica County. Parents' names: Antoni and Zofia. Occupation: farmer.

131 IPN, Rz 358/111, Akta w sprawie karnej prowadzonej przeciwko: Józef Kapelusz, imię ojca: Mikołaj, ur. 23.3.1912 r., Protokół przesłuchania świadka, Wielopole, dnia 10 listopada 1948 r., M.O. w Wielopolu [Files in the criminal case against: Józef Kapelusz, father's name: Mikołaj, b. March 23, 1912, Transcript of witness interrogation, Wielopole, November 10, 1948, M.O. in Wielopole], pp. 0009–0010, here: p. 0009.

132 Interrogated as a suspect in Rzeszów on August 21, 1950, Wodzis testified that he knew about Jews from Dębica. See IPN, Rz 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania Wodzis Stanisława, Rzeszów dnia 21.VIII 1950 r., Kuchta Władysław, Oficer Śledczy Woj. Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w Rzeszowie [Transcript of interrogation of Stanisław Wodzis, August 21, 1950, Kuchta Władysław, Investigation Officer of the Voiv. Public Security Office in Rzeszów], pp. 0180–0182, here: p. 0181.

133 Ibid., p. 0010.

134 Ibid., p. 0010.

135 This phrase is inspired by what Grzegorz Niziołek called "we know not what we are seeing". This is the context of the phrase: "During the phase of 'hot testimonies' immediately after the war, theatre was in fact silent; the 1960s, on the other hand, saw many important productions, which address the topic of the Holocaust sometimes head-on, though often at the limits of visibility and utterability. Or [...] – which is most interesting – within the field of total visibility, but at the cost of referentiality, i.e. of losing the essential frame of reference. This mechanism may be summarized as follows: we know not what we are seeing" (Niziołek, 2019, p. 34).

were, as a rule, murdered. At the same time, he did not see a woman with a child, but the phantasmatic “Jew”, a figure that triggers certain associations, including the association of Jews with money.

Meanwhile, Wojciech Stasiowski from Mała knew what he had seen. However, he left both the victims of antisemitic violence and the perpetrators and their accomplices anonymous. As a result, he sided with the German occupiers and their assistants in the crimes against Jews. Stasiowski testified on November 9, 1948 to M.O. in Wielopole “that in June 1943 the Jewish Brzezinskis brought” an unknown person to him, namely a woman with a child. According to him, the child was about four years old. “About a week later” he went to Dębica. There he found out that “the Gestapo were pursuing the Jews”. From this statement it appears that the *Judenjagd* was a public event, one that people knew of and talked about. Moreover, the Germans wanted their policy of antisemitic extermination to be visible.

Stasiowski ran home to “warn” the woman “to leave the house”. Then he saw how the woman with the child ran away and how the perpetrators caught her with the child: “When she left my house, she went into the nearby forest”. In the meantime, “the Germans noticed her and followed her into the forest [...] they caught her and took her with the child, and drove her to Wielopole”. He further testified: “Among those [who] took this person and the child, there were two Germans and two Blue Policemen from the Wielopole Police Station”. He added: “what the names of these policemen were, I do not know”.¹³⁶ In other words, he was protecting his accomplices from Wielopole. When he was interrogated three years later as a witness by the district prosecutor’s office in Dębica, Wojciech Stasiowski stuck to his testimony from November 1948, adding that “the woman and the child were captured by two Blue Policemen from the M.O. station Wielopole Skrzyńskie and one gendarme in a German uniform, though I did not recognize any of these Blue Policemen”.¹³⁷ In the interrogation in 1948, Stasiowski first mentions Germans as the perpetrators of the *Judenjagd*, and later two Germans and two Blue Policemen. In the 1951 interrogation, however, he mentions two policemen and only one German. It is possible that the figure of the German and the Germans in his interrogation is a fabrication, or that he is conflating various crimes against Jewish women. He further stated:

Józef Kapelusz, presented to me today, was a former police functionary in Wielopole [...] I didn’t know the police from the station in Wielopole [...] and of course today I cannot tell if he was one of them who captured a woman with a child during the German occupation.

136 IPN, Rz 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Stasiowskiego Wojciecha, dnia 9.XI. 1948 [Transcript of interrogation of witness Stasiowski Wojciech, November 9, 1948], pp. 0011–0012.

137 IPN, Rz 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Stasiowskiego Wojciecha, dnia 6 lipca 1951 r. w Dębicy, A. Bobrecki, St. Referendarz Śledczy. Asesor, Prokuratury Powiatu w Dębicy [Transcript of interrogation of witness Stasiowski Wojciech, July 6, 1951 in Dębica, A. Bobrecki, Senior Investigative law clerk. Assessor, County Prosecutor’s Office in Dębica], pp. 0106–0107, here: p. 0106.

Whether Józef Kapelusz came to my house during the occupation, I cannot say, because I did not know him and I do not recognize him.¹³⁸

It would seem obvious that Stasiowski from Mała, who appears in Blumental's writings, knew Kapelusz. In the countryside, everybody knows everybody else, especially such an important figure as the constable. Personal and economic contacts between policemen and villagers existed during the German occupation¹³⁹ and were maintained after the liberation.

Evidence of the fact that residents knew policemen in Wielopole is also provided by the testimony of Wojciech Bujak, who lived in the village of Nawsie in the Wielopole Skrzyńskie commune. Nawsie is situated 3.7 km east of Wielopole. Bujak saw "how a woman with a child of about 3–5 years of age was led [away] by two Blue Police officers and one German". While he testified that one of these policemen was named Malczyński, he stated that he could not say "what the other's name was".¹⁴⁰ He stated that he "personally" did not know the woman. He only heard from people that "she was a Jewess, the wife of a teacher or doctor from Dębica".¹⁴¹ The fact that Bujak walked part of the road with the policemen from Brzeziny to Wielopole after the arrest of the woman with the child indicates that he knew the Blue Policemen:

As she was being led from Brzeziny to Wielopole, I was walking with them about 300 meters. I heard as the Blue Policemen talked among themselves about releasing the woman, but the German immediately said that if she had a daughter and not a son, he would have agreed. I also saw how the above-mentioned person was shot to death along with the child. One of the Blue officers was present at the shooting of this woman, but I do not know which one, I remember it was in the evening and I was watching from a distance, the German shot them, before being shot she was beaten by the German.¹⁴²

In this version of events, the German is both the initiator and the perpetrator of the murder. While Bujak stated in 1948 that he did not remember the year, month and day of the event, in an interrogation on May 14, 1951, conducted by the district prosecutor in Dębica, he testified that:

[...] in the spring or summer of 1943 he was an eyewitness to how two Polish police officers, or maybe only one police officer [...] and one [...] in German uniform [...], were leading a young woman with a small child, a son about 3–4 years old. I saw that a woman with a child was taken out of the jail in Wielopole and led to the Jewish cemetery, from a distance I watched as an officer of the Polish Police at the same cemetery stopped on one side, and the German in uniform shot first, from a certain distance, at the child, and at that moment the woman, probably the mother of the child, jumped at the German and tried to beat him. Of course, the German was stronger than the woman and he beat her, ordered her to strip off

138 Ibid., pp. 0106–0107.

139 IPN, Rz 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania świadka, Karola Boronowicza 7 lipca 1951 r. [Transcript of interrogation of witness Karol Boronowicz, July 7, 1951], pp. 0136–0137, here: p. 0136.

140 IPN, Rz 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania świadka, 2 listopada 1948 r. na posterunku M.O. w Wielopolu [Transcript of witness interrogation, November 2, 1948 at the M.O. in Wielopole], pp. 0015–0016, here: p. 0015.

141 Ibid., p. 0016.

142 Ibid., p. 0016.

her clothes and when she resisted and did not want to take off her clothes, the German shot her to death with 1 or 2 shots [...] After shooting the Jewish woman and the child, the German, along with the Polish policeman, left the Jewish cemetery. I firmly state that the policeman, who stood on one side of the Jewish cemetery [...], was called Malczyński and not Kapelusz. I knew the Blue Policeman Kapelusz exactly and I would have recognized him. [...] I did not see the Blue Policeman N. Kapelusz at all, either walking from the jail or in the cemetery.¹⁴³

It is worth noting that Bujak reports a version of the shooting which differs from that which the participating observers told Blumental. At the beginning of Part II of Nachman Blumental's records we read: "They killed my Wife with one shot. She asked to be shot first. She did not want to watch her Son die". So the question is: Did Bujak confuse two separate crimes against Jewish women in Wielopole? Maybe he confused Maria Blumental with Bergerowa? At the end of Bujak's testimony, we read: "Was the woman shot with the child a jewess [*sic!*]? I cannot say that for certain, and people said that she was the wife of a doctor from Dębica. I also cannot say that the woman who was shot is called Blumental".¹⁴⁴ In his records, Blumental mentions a female dentist from Dębica, "who, together with her eight-year-old son, was also shot in Wielopole". It is possible that she was murdered in the manner described by Bujak. In his testimony, it is worth noting that there was no audience or crowd in his account of what happened in the Jewish cemetery, as if no one was there except him. It strikes me that Bujak cleared Kapelusz of the accusation of participation owing to the fact that he knew him very well and shared his values.

We see another instance of the protection of the accomplice Kapelusz in the case of witness Maksymilian Wojnarowski, head of the Municipal National Council in Wielopole. Like Bujak, Wojnarowski was a farmer and lived in the village of Nawsie near Wielopole. Interrogated as a witness on October 30, 1948 by the M.O. in Wielopole, Wojnarowski testified that he was in Wielopole in 1943 and saw "when the former Blue Policemen [...] Jakij N., Kapelusz N. and one German brought a woman to Wielopole from Brzeziny, with a child, around 3–5 years old".¹⁴⁵ Three years later, he changed his story. On May 14, 1951, during an interrogation by the prosecutor's office in Dębica, Wojnarowski testified that "in the summer of 1943", while in Wielopole, he "by chance" noticed, "at a certain point", that "from the direction of Brzeziny a wagon was headed towards the town of Wielopole". When the wagon approached, Wojnarowski saw that "a Blue Policeman was sitting on the wagon next to an unknown driver". He testified: "but today, due to the passage of time, I cannot say I remember if it was the policeman Kapelusz, or if it was Malczyński". We further read:

143 IPN, Rz 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania świadka, dnia 14 maja 1951 r. w Dębicy [Transcript of witness interrogation, May 14, 1951 in Dębica], pp. 0093–0094.

144 Ibid., p. 0994.

145 IPN, Rz 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania świadka, dnia 30 października 1948 r. na Posterunku M.O. w Wielopolu [Transcript of witness interrogation, October 30, 1948 at the M.O. Station in Wielopole], pp. 0013–0014, here: p. 0012.

In the middle of the wagon, on the far seat, there was a young woman with a child of about 3 or 4 years old, and sitting next to her was a German in uniform and a person dressed in civilian clothes, whom I recognized as Wilhelm Jaki.¹⁴⁶

Wojnarowski saw that a woman with a child was led “into the premises of the Police Station and, in about 1/2 hour, these 2 people were taken to the jail”. That evening, Wojnarowski approached the “window” of the jail and started a conversation “with that woman”. He did not say anything, and – according to the transcript of interrogation – he was not asked, about the purpose of this conversation. He testified that the woman had given her last name, which he did not remember. However, he remembered that she had “a little boy around her” and that she expressed hope that “with the child she would be released”. Wojnarowski stated that he did not know what “happened next”. He testified that he had learned “from people” that “the woman and the child were shot the next day in the Jewish cemetery”. He also heard “from people” – he stated that he did not remember their names – that “on the day before the execution, in the jail, the woman was supposed to have been raped by both the Blue Policemen and the German”.¹⁴⁷ Wojnarowski’s testimony proves the effectiveness of social control. Those present see what is happening and comment on the event on a regular basis. Did the people Wojnarowski spoke to know about the rape because they saw the act of sexual violence with their own eyes, or did they participate in the rape themselves? Or maybe Wojnarowski used “people” as an alibi to maintain the façade of a good Christian?

Rape was an integral part of the crimes committed against Jewish women during the Holocaust. Generally speaking, the universe of “male-soldier bodies – political fascists”¹⁴⁸ was different than that of non-fascists. As we know from the testimony of Tadeusz Markiel, Christian rapists who were not fascists “made sure that everything was done secretly and quietly” (Markiel, 2011, p. 82). It is possible that participating observers, when they spoke to Nachman Blumental, concealed the rape issue from him. In Wojnarowski’s testimony, Maria Blumental remains an anonymous Jewish woman (“that woman”).

146 IPN, Rz 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania świadka, dnia 15 maja 1951 r. w Dębicy [Transcript of witness interrogation, May 15, 1951 in Dębica], pp. 0095–0096, here: p. 0095.

147 IPN Rz 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania świadka, dnia 15 maja 1951 r. w Dębicy [Transcript of witness interrogation, May 15, 1951 in Dębica], p. 0096.

148 In his book *Männerphantasien*, in which he describes fascism as a brutal way of creating reality through the body of a German male soldier of the Freikorps movement, Klaus Theweleit describes this structure of corporeality. A man of the Freikorps is “not fully born” (Theweleit, 2015b, p. 709). Using Jonathan Littell’s study of Degrelle, Theweleit points to confirmation that “there is a *universal structure* of the body of a male soldier-political fascist. [...] Slogans: male *self-birth* through killing others, the *laughter* of the torturer, the institutional body, allowed entry into divine crime, the *sexualization* of violence, the theatrical *display* of force, the *staging* of acts of violence” (Theweleit, 2009, pp. 120–121). Emphasis in original – K.S. According to Theweleit, staging is a characteristic feature of fascist violence (Theweleit, 2015a, p. 49). Theweleit refers to Naomi Greene’s book (Greene, 1990) on the work of the anti-fascist and communist Pier Paolo Pasolini, in which the author develops the concept of staging based on the example of the film *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975). Rape was an integral part of the crimes committed against Jewish women and against women whom the Germans classified as *Untermenschen* (Mühlhäuser, 2010).

Three years later, during an interrogation by the prosecutor in Dębica, Wojnarowski cleared Kapelusz of the allegation of participating in the crime against the Blumentals, claiming that he was unable to remember whether it involved Kapelusz or another policeman.¹⁴⁹

Finally, on January 30, 1951, three years after the M.O. report in Wielopole, the District Prosecutor in Tarnów decided to place Józef Kapelusz under temporary detention. The grounds:

[Kapelusz was] suspected of a crime committed under Article 1, decree of August 31, 1944, in that in 1943 in Wielopole, Dębica County, he took part in the capture and arrest of a woman of Jewish nationality and her child and thus acting hand in hand with the occupation authorities.¹⁵⁰

On May 14, 1951, the District Prosecutor's Office in Dębica wrote to Nachman Blumental asking him to appear on May 22, 1951 in connection with the investigation against Kapelusz.¹⁵¹ In response to this letter, Adam Rutkowski from the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw informed the judicial authorities that:

[...] citizen Blumental Nachman has permanently left the country and is currently in Israel. (Tel-Aviv, Usyszkin Street. 56 []) If the case does not personally concern citizen Blumental [...], please explain the whole matter to us so we can respond. – We hereby inform you of the receipt of the Prosecutor's notification along with the letter below from Blumental in Israel.¹⁵²

Blumental was not called as a witness in the case against Kapelusz. On July 13, 1951, the suspect Kapelusz denied that he had participated in the murder of Jews hiding in Dębica County.¹⁵³ A few days later, on July 26, 1951, the district prosecutor's office in Dębica filed a motion to partially discontinue the investigation in the case of Józef Kapelusz. Regarding Holocaust-related crimes, there are accusations that Kapelusz "b/ participated in the shooting of several Jews around Mała" and that "c/ [he] captured a Jewish woman with her son (Maria née Tewel Blumental) [. ...] and put them in the jail, from where, the next day, she was taken to the Jewish cemetery and shot".¹⁵⁴ In the statement of grounds we read that:

Interrogated as a suspect, Józef Kapelusz flatly denied that he had participated in the above-mentioned crimes [a-d] and the witnesses questioned in this regard for the above-mentioned charges in points b. [and] c. did not provide confirmation, testifying that they could not state that Kapelusz was involved in the above-described murder.¹⁵⁵

149 IPN, Rz 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania świadka, dnia 6 lipca 1951 r. w Dębicy, St. Referendarz Śledczy Asesor Prokuratury Powiatu A. Bobrecki w Dębicy [Transcript of witness interrogation, July 6, 1951 in Dębica, Senior Investigative law clerk. Assessor, County Prosecutor's Office A. Bobrecki in Dębica], pp. 0100–0101, here: p. 0100.

150 IPN, Rz 358/111, p. 0058.

151 Ibid., p. 0150.

152 Ibid., p. 0115.

153 IPN, Rz, 358/111, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego, dnia 13 lipca 1951 w Dębicy [Transcript of interrogation of suspect, July 13, 1951 in Dębica], pp. 0191–0193, here: p. 0193.

154 IPN, Rz, 358/111, pp. 0200–0201.

155 Ibid., p. 0201.

The indictment against Józef Kapelusz, dated July 26, 1951, does not mention the murder of Maria Blumental and Ariel Blumental.¹⁵⁶

Neither Kapelusz nor Jaki were brought to justice in connection with the murders of Maria Blumental and Ariel Blumental in Wielopole Skrzyńskie in June 1943. The crime went unpunished.

Warszawa–Vancouver–Warszawa–Vancouver–Warszawa–New York–Warszawa–Jena–New York–Jena–Warszawa–Dębica–Wielopole Skrzyńskie–Brzeziny–Mała–Dębica–Warszawa–Jena–Warszawa

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**Produkowanie antysemitycznego konsensusu w ramach Judenjagd.
Rola Polaków w Zagładzie na przykładzie zamordowania rodziny Nachmana Blumentala
w Wielopolu Skrzyńskim podczas okupacji niemieckiej**

Abstrakt: Artykuł, oparty na zapiskach Nachmana Blumentala odkrytych przeze mnie w czasie pracy nad jego archiwum, które wydobyłam na światło dzienne, oraz na dokumentacji dwóch śledztw, traktuje o współsprawstwie Polaków – mundurowych (policji granatowej) i cywilów – w nazistowskim projekcie Zagłady w powiecie dębickim podczas okupacji niemieckiej. Analizuję w nim mechanizm, który uruchamiał przemoc antysemityczną w ramach *Judenjagd*, czyli polowania na Żydów. Dowodzę, że to postawa i zachowanie otoczenia zdecydowały o skuteczności niemieckiego nazistowskiego projektu prześladowania i mordowania wszystkich Żydów bez wyjątku. Grupa większościowa odgrywa rolę „drugiej instancji” (Elżbieta Janicka). Rekonstruując zbrodnię na Arielu Blumentalu i Marii Blumentalowej w czerwcu 1943 roku w Brzezinach, Małej i Wielopolu Skrzyńskim oraz dekonstruując mistyfikację zbrodni przez mieszkańców, pokazuję, na czym polega proces i jak funkcjonuje mechanizm samoprzedstawiania się jako osoby niezaangażowanej. „Obserwatorzy uczestniczący” (Elżbieta Janicka) maskują bowiem własny udział w zamordowaniu rodziny Nachmana Blumentala. Moje zadanie polega zatem na interpretacji tego, co zostało powiedziane, i tego, co nie zostało powiedziane. Zbrodnia, o której traktuje artykuł, jest emblematyczna w tym sensie, że rzuca światło na ramę społeczno-kulturową i na krajobraz Zagłady. Pokazuje samotność ukrywających się, wydanych i skazanych na śmierć przez sąsiadów.

Wyrażenia kluczowe: antysemityzm; Zagłada; *Judenjagd*; policja granatowa; powiat dębicki; obserwatorzy uczestniczący; konsensus antysemityczny; krajobraz; cmentarz żydowski



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